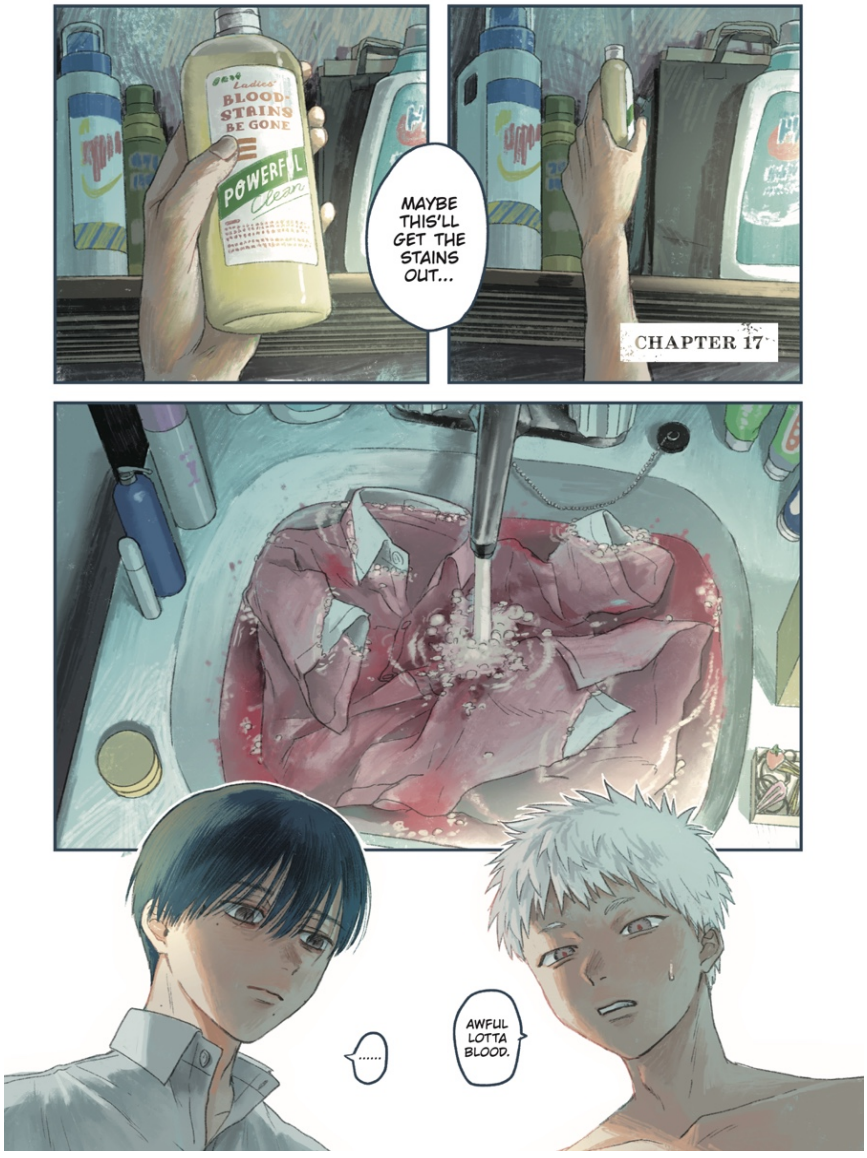
MOKUMOKUREN

4

THE SUMMER HIKARU DIED

MOKUMOKUREN
4
THE
SUMMER
HIKARU
DIED


Ladies'
BLOOD-STAINS BE GONE
POWERFUL
Clean
MAYBE THIS'LL GET THE STAINS OUT...
CHAPTER 17
.....
AWFUL LOTTA BLOOD.

CHAPTER 17

THE SUMMER
HIKARU
DIED
MOKUMOKUREN
4

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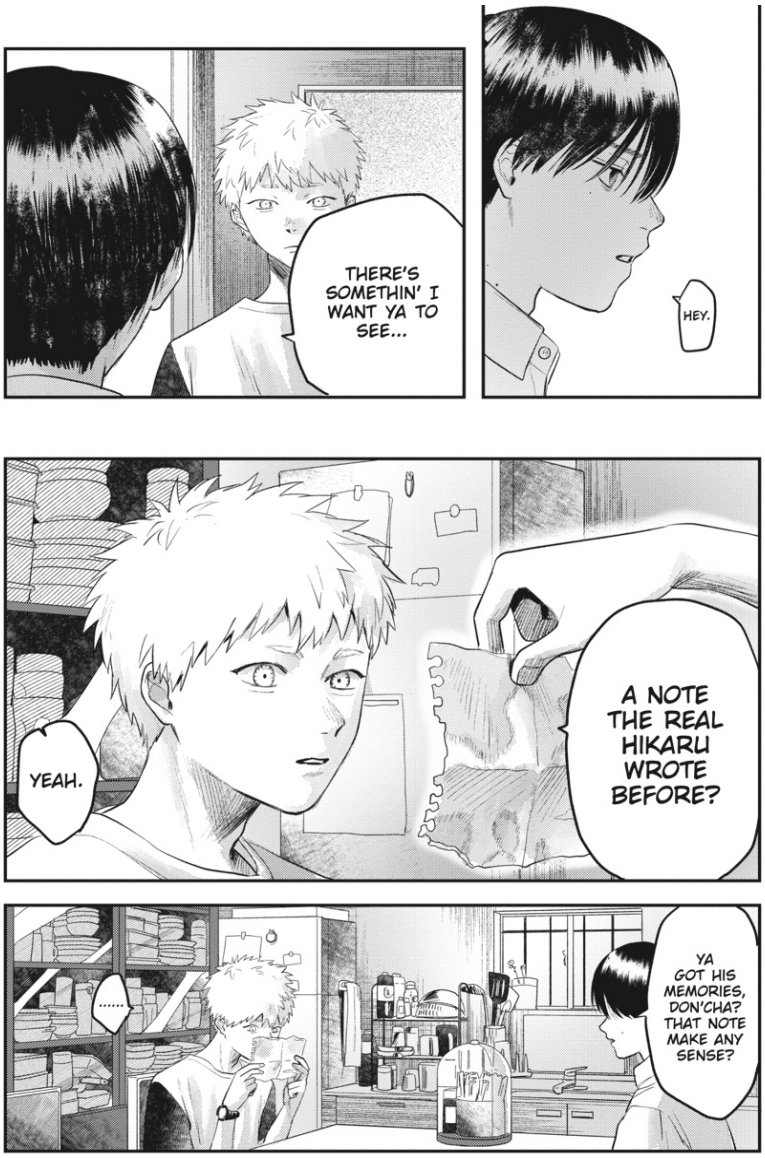
PHEW...
IT'S LIKE WE'RE COVERIN' UP A MURDER, HUH?
WE GOTTA CLEAN ALL THIS 'FORE MY MOM COMES HOME.
ALL THAT'S LEFT IS GETTIN' THE BLOOD OUTTA THESE CLOTHES.
FSHHH
SPLISH
SPLASH
YEAH... FEELS THAT WAY.
SO...
...HOW'S YER WOUND DOIN'?
SQUIK

FIGURED I'D FIX IT UP.
OH, THANKS FOR THE CHANGE OF CLOTHES.
"FIX" ...?
IT'S HEALED...
BUT IF IT'S SOMETHIN' THAT STOPS ME FROM MOVIN', I GOTTA FIX MYSELF UP, Y'KNOW?
I DON'T FEEL MUCH IN THE WAY OF PAIN, SO I'LL LEAVE SMALL CUTS AN' BRUISES ALONE.
...SO MY LAST-DITCH ATTACK WAS ALL FOR NOTHIN', HUH?

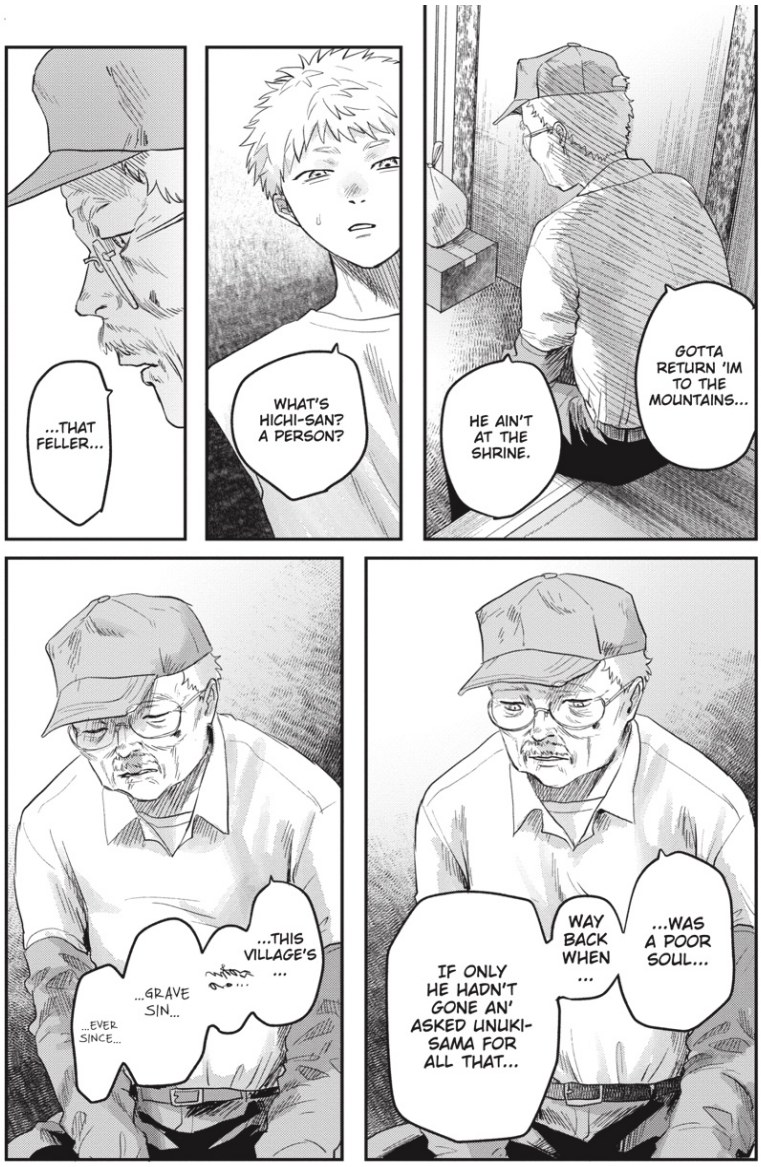

THERE'S SOMETHIN' I WANT YA TO SEE...
HEY.
A NOTE THE REAL HIKARU WROTE BEFORE?
YEAH.
.....
YA GOT HIS MEMORIES, DON'CHA? THAT NOTE MAKE ANY SENSE?

OLD LADY MATSUURA... SHE MENTIONED THAT NAME TOO.
HMM... WELL, THING IS...
NOUNUKI-SAMA?
..."NUKI-SAMA"...
...I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHIN' 'BOUT THIS.
IF HIKARU WROTE IT, I SHOULD REMEMBER IT...
...BUT MY MEMORY'S ALL FUZZY...
MAYBE THAT "NOUNUKI-SAMA" FELLER...
...IS ME?

THIS ROOM'S A MESS, BY THE WAY...
IS IT?
THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' ELSE IN HIS HOME NEITHER...
THERE'S NOTHIN' HERE.
NOTHIN' ABOUT YOU...
HIKARU MADE THIS IN ELE-MENTARY SCHOOL.
I THINK IT WAS S'POSED TO BE A CAT.
OH!
ガラ
ガラ
RATTLE
ガラ
RATTLE
RATTLE

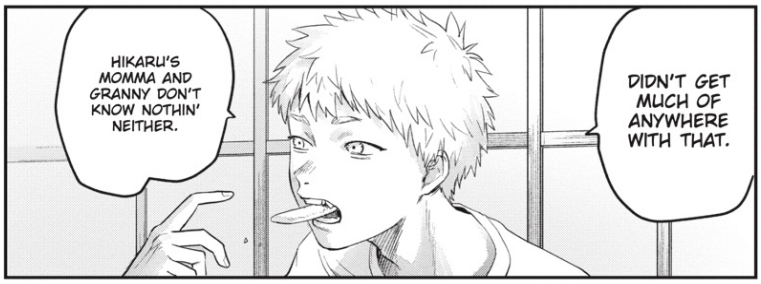
...MAYBE HIKARU'S GRANDPA KNOWS SOMETHIN'.
IT'S GRANDPA.
THIS IS 'ROUND 'BOUT WHEN HE GETS BACK FROM THE MUSHROOM FARM.
HEY, GRANDPA ...
MM? WHAT IS IT?
OOF...
HE'S GOIN' SENILE, SO I'M NOT SURE WHAT HE SAYS'LL MAKE MUCH SENSE...

HMM?
SO, I GOT THIS NOTE...
Hichi
AH YEAH...
HIKA-RU.
WHERE'D HICHI-SAN GO?
HUH?
HI—


...THAT FELLER...
WHAT'S HICHI-SAN? A PERSON?
HE AIN'T AT THE SHRINE.
GOTTA RETURN 'IM TO THE MOUNTAINS...
...EVER SINCE...
...GRAVE SIN...
...THIS VILLAGE'S ...
IF ONLY HE HADN'T GONE AN' ASKED UNUKI-SAMA FOR ALL THAT...
WAY BACK WHEN ...
...WAS A POOR SOUL...

HEY.
I THINK HE'S 'BOUT TO DRIFT OFF TO THE HEAVENS.
SNAP
HIKARU.
GO AN' FETCH THE SHIITAKE FROM OUT FRONT.
HUH?
GRAND-PA...
...WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF YER STORY?
ACK!
YO-SHIKI?
WELL, IF IT AIN'T YOSHIKI. MY, YOU'VE GROWN!
YEP, SURE HAVE.

WHAT'S THAT...?


HIKARU'S MOMMA AND GRANNY DON'T KNOW NOTHIN' NEITHER.
DIDN'T GET MUCH OF ANYWHERE WITH THAT.

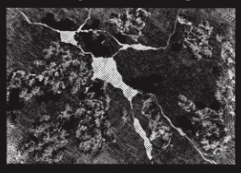
SO IT MUST BE SOMETHIN' ONLY THE MEN IN THE INDOU FAMILY DO...
HIKARU'S DADDY DID SOMETHIN' OUT IN THOSE MOUNTAINS.

MAYBE SOMETHIN' YER FAMILY'S DONE FOR GENERATIONS?
YEAH.
HIKARU'S GRANDPA SAID SOMETHIN' ABOUT "RETURNIN' IT TO THE MOUNTAINS" TOO...
AND THAT'S WHAT HIKARU WAS DOIN' IN THE MOUN-TAINS...
AH!
OH YEAH!
THERE'S SOMETHIN' I WANTED TO SHOW YA.

15: Really Unsettling Anonymous 08/31/2007 (Fri) 18:05:30:01
There’s a place called Kibogayama (Hope Mountain) around XX in XX Prefecture, but the names of the settlements around it all have body parts in them. It’s creepy...

17: Really Unsettling Anonymous 08/31/2007 (Fri) 19:40:38:22
>>15
Deetz plz

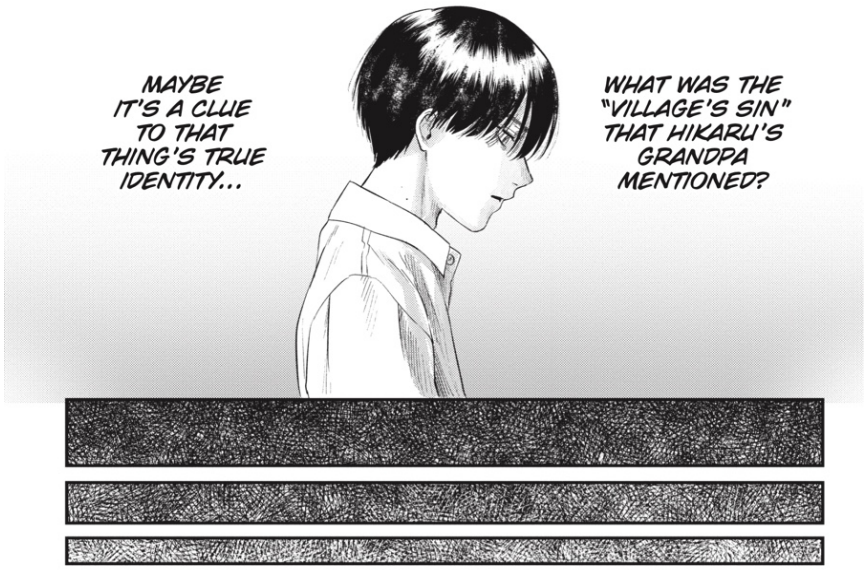
18: Really Unsettling Anonymous 08/31/2007 (Fri) 19:45:12:50

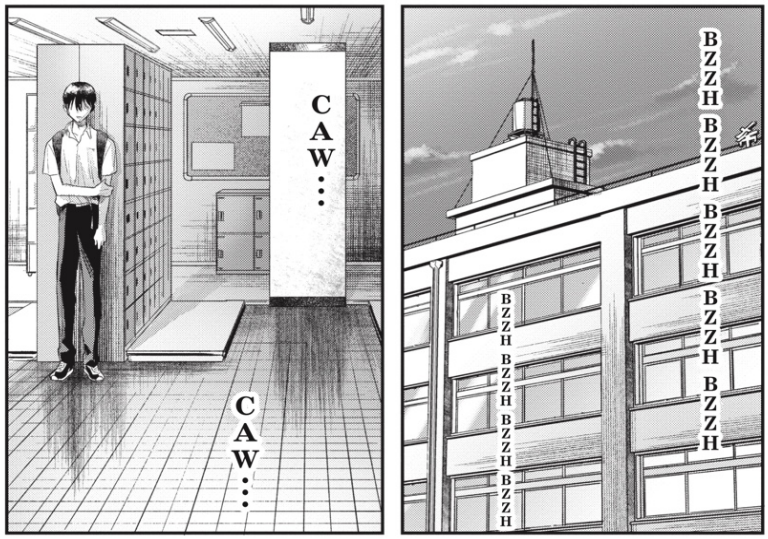


From top to bottom, there's Kubitachi (Head-stand), Udetori (Arm-take), and Ashidori (Leg-take). There's a town called Kibogayama (Hope Mountain) in the center, but even that one's weird. It's so unnatural it's actually unsettling

19: Really Unsettling Anonymous 08/31/2007 (Fri) 19:50:20:12
Places with "hope" in their name tend to be bad news. Something dangerous must've happened there, and it got an unlucky name. But they couldn't sell land like that, so they changed the name at some point. I bet that's what happened.

20: Really Unsettling Anonymous 08/31/2007 (Fri) 20:01:30:56
The place where I live has a pretty crazy name.
It's called Boukijahousaiakutani
(Violent-ogre-snake-crumble-worst-valley)


MAYBE IT'S A CLUE TO THAT THING'S TRUE IDENTITY...
WHAT WAS THE "VILLAGE'S SIN" THAT HIKARU'S GRANDPA MENTIONED?


CAW...
CAW...
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH

JOLT
ビクッ
AH!!
...HE SAID HE FORGOT SOMETHIN' AND HASN'T COME BACK.
MAYBE I SHOULD GO ON AHEAD TO THE LIBRARY...
YA MISSED SCHOOL YESTERDAY... BUT I GUESS YER FEELIN' ALL RIGHT TODAY?
UM...

AH HA HA!
AH HA!
YEAH, I'M...
ER...
NAH.
ACTU-ALLY...
I'M FINE.
...YOU OKAY? AFTER ALL THAT...
...SINCE THEN, I'VE HAD TROUBLE HEARIN' OUTTA MY RIGHT EAR...
EVEN MY DOCTOR DOESN'T KNOW WHY.
WONDER WHAT IT COULD BE...
...OH...
...I'M SORRY.

UM... BUT...
...HIKARU WAS ACTIN' REAL FUNNY BACK THERE... WASN'T HE?
WHAT'RE YA APOLOGIZIN' FOR, YOSHIKI?
AIN'T NO ONE'S FAULT.
...IF...
THINKIN' BACK, THERE'S BEEN ALL SORTS OF WEIRD THINGS ABOUT 'IM, AN'—
...WOULD YA HATE 'IM?
IF THAT WERE TRUE...
MAYBE IT TOOK OVER HIKARU'S BODY.
ALMOST LIKE...HE WASN'T HIKARU.
THAT EVIL SPIRIT I WAS TALKIN' ABOUT...

HUH?
A-ARE YOU BEIN' SERIOUS ...?
JUST... DON'T HATE 'IM TOO MUCH, ALL RIGHT?
...HUH?
I-I DUNNO...
...NAH.
JUST FOOLIN'.
YOSHIKI ...?

BOOM
SEE YA!
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN!!
IF THERE'S ANY TROUBLE... I'M HERE TO HELP!
A—
ANY-WAY!
SORRY. GOT HELD UP.

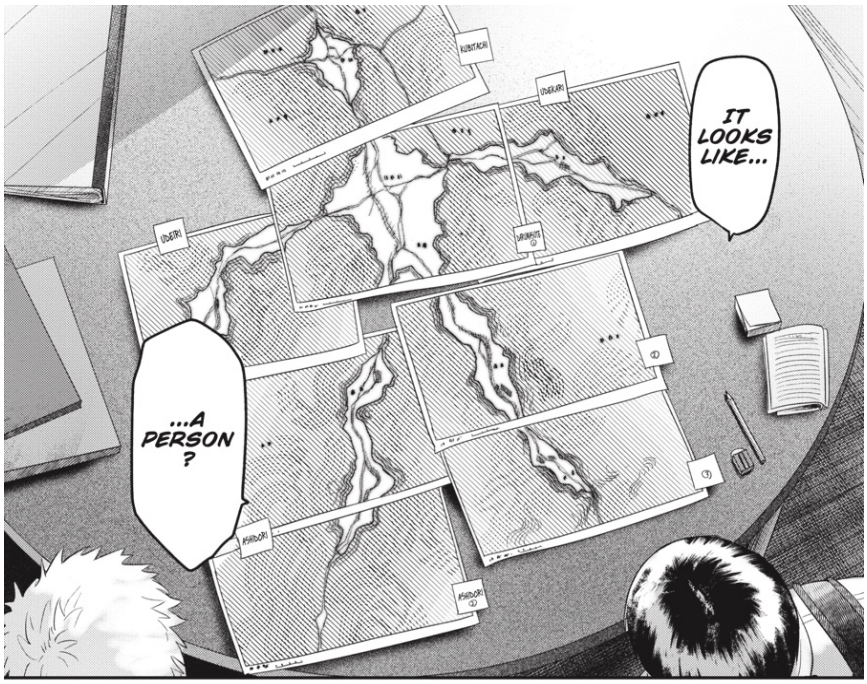
THAT ...
SOUNDS LIKE...
...ASAKO CAN'T HEAR ALL TOO GOOD FROM HER RIGHT EAR NOW.
...MIGHT BE 'COS I TAPPED IT.
...THING WITH HUMANS IS, THEY BREAK WHEN I MESS WITH 'EM.
THEY START SEEIN' JUNK AND DYIN' WHEN I TOUCH 'EM.
BUT ASAKO'S GOT A STRONG MIND...
...SO INSTEAD OF BREAKIN' ...
...MAYBE IT JUST AFFECTED HER HEARIN'...
THAT'S MY GUESS.

HAAH ...
YOU DON'T FEEL A THING, DO YA?
YER THE ONE WHO DID IT, THOUGH.
GOOD THING IT WAS JUST HER EAR. COULDA BEEN WORSE... I THINK.
...LET'S GO TO THE LIBRARY.
'KAY.
WE CAN'T KEEP THIS A SECRET FOREVER...
...CAN WE?

RECEPTION
EXCHANGE HALL/LIBRARY
AWFUL LOTTA BOOKS HERE.
WE'RE LOOKIN' FOR MAPS. OLD ONES.
HERE WE ARE... THIS ONE'S FROM THE EARLY MEIJI ERA.
IT'S A MAP FROM THE LATE 1800s.

KIBOGA-YAMA...
...AIN'T ON HERE.
NAH, IT IS.
THIS HERE'S MOUNT TENBAN.
AND IF THE SHRINE'S HERE, THEN RIGHT HERE'S...
捨広達
"SUTE"...? WHA...?
NAW.
READ IT FROM THE RIGHT.
..."DARU-MASUTE"?

...WE COULD LINE IT UP WITH OTHER MAPS.
THEY SHOULD ALSO HAVE MAPS OF KUBITACHI AN' OTHER PLACES IN THE AREA.
DARUMA-SUTE?
THE HECK KINDA NAME IS THAT?
WAS KIBOGA-YAMA REALLY CALLED THAT?
UDEKARI.
ASHIDORI.
THOSE PLACES HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH.
DARUMA-SUTE.
THE LAND STRETCHED OUT LENGTH-WISE BELOW IT.
BUT THAT DOESN'T EXIST ANYMORE.
KUBITACHI.
...BUT IT'S SPELLED ALL DIFFERENT FROM HOW IT'S WRITTEN NOW.
UDEIRI.
THAT PLACE IS A GHOST TOWN NOW.


IT LOOKS LIKE...
...A PERSON?

UM...
THAT'S SOOOO... CREEPY!!
DANG! NO WAY!

HUH?
THE NAMES MATCH UP WITH HUMAN BODY PARTS...
THE ARM IS "UDEKARI." THE HEAD IS "KUBI-TACHI."
AND I GUESS "DARUMA" IS THE TORSO?

YER SPEAKIN'... A LITTLE LOUD...
AHH!
OH!
NO, NO...
SORRY.
...IS THIS FOR A SCHOOL ASSIGN-MENT?
OH...
WE'RE FROM KUBITACHI AND GO TO YAMA HIGH...
...AND WE'RE RESEARCH-ING OUR HOME-TOWN...
...OR SOME-THING LIKE THAT.
.....

OH MY...
I HAPPEN TO BE FROM KUBITACHI TOO.
PFT!
HE GETS LIKE THIS AT EVEN THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF TROUBLE.
NO, I DON'T THINK SO...MY MOMMA PASSED AWAY RECENTLY, AND I'VE JUST BEEN BACK FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWENTY YEARS...
REALLY...? THEN MAYBE WE MET YOU WHEN WE WERE LITTLE.
HUH?
OH WOW.
AH!
"PASSED AWAY RECENTLY"...?

MATSUURA
WAIT, ARE YOU...
...MATSUURA-SAN'S DAUGHTER?
CHAPTER 17 END

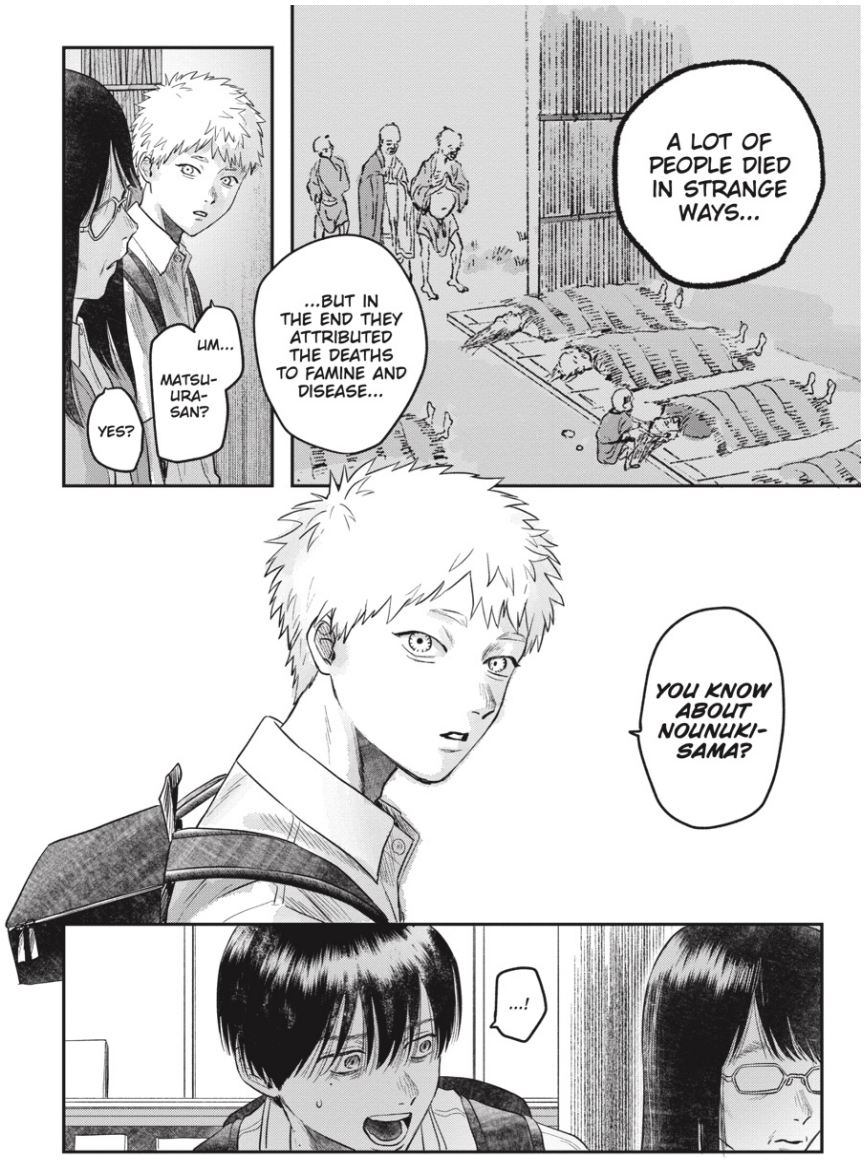
AH...
THE
HOLE...
HE WOUND
UP
SECRETLY
THROWING
IT AWAY.

YOSHIKI CAN'T HANDLE GETTING IN TROUBLE WITH PEOPLE.
IT SEEMS TO REALLY SHOCK HIM, SINCE HE'S USUALLY SO PROPER ABOUT THINGS...
"HIKARU" (AND THE REAL HIKARU) ARE UNFAZED.
SORRY
UH.
AH.

CHAPTER 18
.....
YES... THAT'S RIGHT.
SHE'S MY MOMMA...
BUT SHE WOUND UP DYING BEFORE I COULD SEE HER...
MY...
MY CONDO-LENCES...
SO YOU'RE LOOKING INTO THE HISTORY OF KUBITACHI, ARE YOU?
HAVE YOU SEEN THIS?
HUH ...?

DICTIONARY OF JAPANESE PLACE-NAMES
THE UNABRIDGED DICTIONARY OF JAPANESE PLACE-NAMES...
"KUBITACHI VILLAGE: VILLAGE LOCATED IN ○○ PREFECTURE. INITIALLY PART OF ○△ DOMAIN, AND THEN PART OF ○◇ DOMAIN FROM 1607.
"ORIGINALLY A SINGLE VILLAGE, IT IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN SUBDIVIDED INTO SEPARATE VILLAGES DURING THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1700s), INCLUDING KUBITACHI ('HEAD-SEVER'), UDEKARI ('ARM-CUT'), UDEIRI ('ARM-ENTER'), ASHIDORI 'LEG-TAKE'), AND DARUMASUTE ('DHARMA-DOLL-DISCARD'— CURRENTLY 'KIBOGAYAMA').
"DURING THE MID-MEIJI ERA, UDEIRI MERGED WITH DARUMASUTE.
"IN 1749, THE VILLAGE SUFFERED A SEVERE FAMINE AND EPIDEMIC, LEADING TO NUMEROUS DEATHS AND NEARLY CAUSING ITS ABANDONMENT. HOWEVER, THE POPULATION GRADUALLY RECOVERED AND CONTINUES ON TO THIS DAY..."

IT USED TO BE ONE VILLAGE...
KIBOGAYAMA... KUBITACHI, ALL OF IT.
... HUH ...?
IT'S SO LONG.
FOLKS IN KUBITACHI DON'T REALLY LIKE TALKING TO YOUNGUNS ABOUT VILLAGE HISTORY...
SEEMS LIKE THE MASS DEATHS WERE QUITE THE INCIDENT BACK THEN.
I SORTA KNEW THAT KUBITACHI ALMOST BECAME A GHOST TOWN ON ACCOUNT OF ALL OF THEM DYING...
...BUT I HAD NO IDEA ABOUT THIS STUFF. EVEN THOUGH IT'S MY OWN VILLAGE AN' ALL.


UM...
MATSU-URA-SAN?
YES?
...BUT IN THE END THEY ATTRIBUTED THE DEATHS TO FAMINE AND DISEASE...
A LOT OF PEOPLE DIED IN STRANGE WAYS...
YOU KNOW ABOUT NOUNUKI-SAMA?
...!

...DID MY MOMMA MENTION IT?
.....
...GOSH. CAN'T BELIEVE THAT'S STILL A THING...
YEAH.
WE'RE TRYIN' TO FIGURE OUT WHAT IT IS...
.....
LET'S GO SOMEWHERE ELSE TO TALK ABOUT IT.

IT WAS REAL BIZARRE.
MY MOMMA WOULD ALWAYS GO ON ABOUT "NOUNUKI-SAMA."
...THEN... NOUNUKI-SAMA MUST BE SOME SORTA GHOULIE WHO LIVES UP THERE.
SO SHE ALWAYS TAUGHT US NEVER TO GO INTO THOSE MOUNTAINS.
APPARENTLY, SHE SNUCK INTO THE MOUNTAINS AS A CHILD AND EXPERIENCED SOMETHING DOWNRIGHT TERRIFYIN'.

AND IT'S BEEN THERE SINCE BEFORE THE VILLAGE SPLIT...
NO... IT'S MORE LIKE...A GOD.
"SPECIFIC OFFER-INGS"?
WELL...I DON'T KNOW WHAT WAS OFFERED, EXACTLY.
"WAS"? SO YOU MEAN...
...IT'S NOT LIKE THAT ANYMORE?
NOUNUKI-SAMA'S A GOD THAT LIVES IN THE MOUNTAINS.
PEOPLE SAY... IT WOULD BRING BENEFITS IN EXCHANGE FOR SPECIFIC OFFERINGS.

AFTER ONE PARTICULARLY DEVASTATING FAMINE...
...IT BECAME A CURSED GOD.
THAT'S RIGHT.
AND THAT FAMINE...WAS THAT THE "MASS DEATH INCIDENT" MENTIONED IN THE DICTIONARY?
I THINK SO.
SINCE THEN, NOUNUKI-SAMA...
...STOPPED COMING DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAINS.
THAT'S WHY MY MOMMA ALWAYS USED TO SAY...
...NOT TO GO UP IN THERE.
トン
THMP

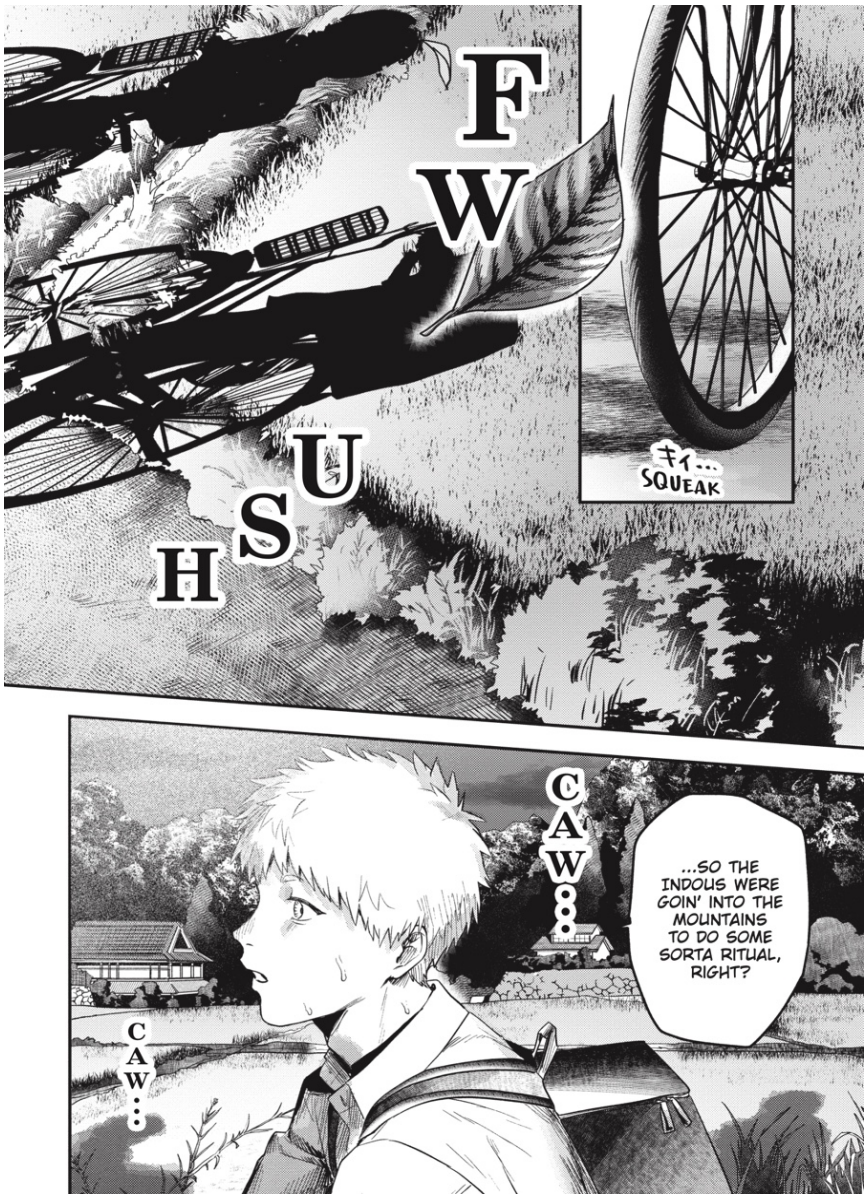
SHOVE
"FUNNY"—!?
DON'T SAY STUFF LIKE THAT...
NO.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
SEEING IT'S THE TRUTH AND ALL...
HUH...
MATSUURA-SAN...DID YER MOMMA SEE NOUNUKI-SAMA?
THAT WHY SHE GOT ALL FUNNY IN THE HEAD?
SHE GOT THAT WAY...
...AFTER MY LITTLE SISTER DISAPPEARED IN THE MOUNTAINS. I THINK THAT WAS A BIG PART OF IT.
HUH?

WHEN I WAS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, MY LITTLE SISTER WENT MISSING THERE...
THE WHOLE VILLAGE WAS IN AN UPROAR.
AND AFTER THAT...MY MOM WAS, WELL, YOU KNOW...
...AND NEVER CAME BACK.
SHE'D ALWAYS BEEN A LITTLE KOOKY, THOUGH.
MAYBE SHE HAD A SIXTH SENSE? I DON'T KNOW...
MY MOMMA AND SOME OF THE VILLAGE FOLK BELIEVED SO...
...BUT WHO CAN SAY?
HUH?
WAIT.
SO WAS THAT MY— I MEAN, NOUNUKI-SAMA'S FAULT?

OH... BUT...
...HAJIME-CHAN AND THE OTHERS SEEMED TO KNOW SOMETHING...
BACK THEN, NOUNUKI-SAMA WAS SOMETHIN' THE VILLAGE ELDERS WOULD GET ALL WORKED UP ABOUT.
AND WE KIDS HAD NO IDEA WHAT WAS GOING ON.
RIGHT, RIGHT.
"HAJIME-CHAN"... YOU MEAN MR. TAKEDA?
TAKEDA, MIKASA, AND MATSU-SHIMA...
WE GREW UP TOGETHER, JUST LIKE YOU TWO.
OHH... I KNOW!

HAJIME'S FATHER...
WHY DON'T YOU TRY ASKIN' OLD MAN TAKEDA?
HE'S AROUND MY MOMMA'S AGE, AN' ALL.
OLD MAN TAKEDA...
HAVEN'T SEEN HIM IN FOREVER...
I ONLY INTERACTED WITH HIM A LITTLE WHEN I WAS SMALL...
THE LIBRARY WILL BE CLOSING SOON..
.....
THANKS SO MUCH...
AND SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.
ESPECIALLY AFTER YOUR MOTHER JUST PASSED...

IT'S ALL RIGHT.
I... WASN'T VERY FRIENDLY WITH MY MOMMA.
BUT STILL...
...SHE WAS IMPORTANT TO ME.
I REALIZE THAT NOW...
FUNNY HOW THAT IS, HUH?
SMILE!
GOOD LUCK...
...WITH YOUR RESEARCH.


FWSUSH
キィ…
SQUEAK
CAW…
…SO THE INDOUS WERE GOIN' INTO THE MOUNTAINS TO DO SOME SORTA RITUAL, RIGHT?
CAW…

CAW...
CAW...
...MOST LIKELY.

AND... NOUNUKI-SAMA BECAME A CURSED GOD...
...SO MAYBE THEY'VE BEEN PERFORMIN' A RITUAL TO TRAP IT UP IN THE MOUNTAINS.
...FEELS LIKE THAT.
AND MAYBE YOU CAME DOWN FROM THERE BECAUSE HIKARU FAILED AT THAT RITUAL...?
THAT COULD BE IT...
BUT THAT DON'T SEEM ENTIRELY RIGHT...
IT'S MORE LIKE...
I...

HEY...
DID I CAUSE ALL THEM DEATHS !?
WAIT, I WAS A CURSED GOD!?
WHAT? NO WAY!
...WHAT YOU DID TO MATSUURA-SAN?
DO YOU UNDER-STAND...
.....

NAH...
ACTUALLY, I...DON'T UNDER-STAND...
COURSE I—
BACK AT THE LIBRARY, MATSUURA-SAN...HAD A LOOK ON HER FACE THAT WAS JUST LIKE YOSHIKI'S...

I'M A FOOL...EVEN OLD LADY MATSUURA HAD FAMILY. I GUESS SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY...
...I STOPPED TREATING HER SERIOUSLY.
YA KNOW...

'COS EVERY MORNIN' I WAKE UP AN' REALIZE MY DADDY AIN'T HERE.
...I HATE MORNIN'S.
...WHAT'RE YA APOLOGIZIN' FOR?
S... SORRY...
...DEATH... CAN BE A LOT FOR PEOPLE...

BUT I—
NO USE APOLOGIZIN'.
YA DON'T KNOW WHAT YA DON'T KNOW, AFTER ALL...
...IT'S OKAY.
EVEN IF YOU WIND UP KILLIN' SOMEONE ELSE AFTER THIS...
...I'LL BEAR THAT SIN WITH YOU.
WHY?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO...

CAW...
CAW...
THANKS.
CAW...
...NAH.
THE MORE I UNDERSTAND ABOUT HIKARU...
...THE CLEARER IT BECOMES THAT HE PROBABLY SHOULDN'T BE HERE.

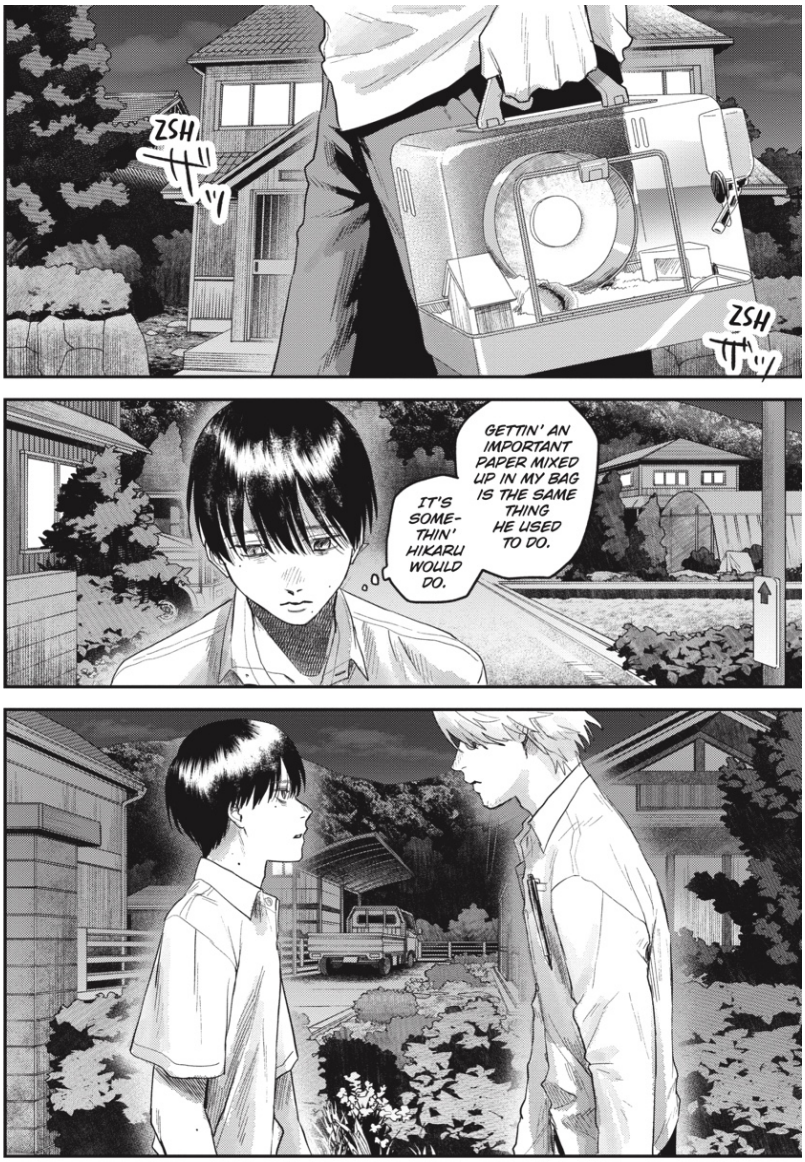
BUT I'M DONE LOOKING AWAY.
KREEEE
KREE

TMP
ドタ
TMP
ドタ
バサッ
FLAP
ガラ
RATTLE
I'M HOME...
WEL-COME BACK!
I HAVE TWO COPIES OF THE WORKSHEET DUE TOMORROW...
Subject Selection Survey
Name
I MUST'VE BROUGHT HIKARU'S WITH ME TOO.

I GOTTA GET IT TO HIM...
BZZH BZZH BZZ
BZZH BZZH BZZH
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
NO CLUES ON THE MOUNTAIN BESIDES THIS, AND THE IMPURITIES ARE INCREASING...
...IN THE SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS.
BZZH BZZH BZZH

BZZH BZZH BZZH
THAT'S MY GUESS.
AND THEY USED IT TO ENTER THE MOUNTAIN WHEN IT WAS DEFILED BY IMPURITIES...
BZZH BZZH BZZH
THIS...
...IS WHAT THE INDOUS WERE USING FOR THEIR RITUAL.
18:30
Satou
Hide
Please contact me. It's urgent.
Do not neglect your interim report.
-Satou
Message
ブー
VRR
Please contact me. It's urgent.
Do not neglect your interim report.
-Satou

Case AA-104
Continuing investigation.
No abnormalities detected.
TAP
WHAT A PAIN IN THE ASS.
...THIS COMPANY REALLY SUCKS.
THERE'S NO WAY I'M LETTING THEM HAVE THEIR WAY...
BZZH BZZH BZZH
BZZH BZZH


ZSH
ZSH
GETTIN' AN IMPORTANT PAPER MIXED UP IN MY BAG IS THE SAME THING HE USED TO DO.
IT'S SOME-THIN' HIKARU WOULD DO.

NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE...
HE'S TALL.
SQUEE!
SQUEEEEAK!
SHAKE
RATTLE
PAUSE

HEY, KID.
YOU FROM AROUND HERE?
CHAPTER 18 END

JOINT
RESPONSIBILITY

HIKARU FORGOT HIS HOMEWORK THAT DAY AND CAUGHT FRESH HELL IN FRONT OF THE WHOLE CLASS. HE MADE THE EXCUSE THAT HE DID IT BUT LOST IT, AND THAT MADE EVERYONE LAUGH AT HIM EVEN MORE.

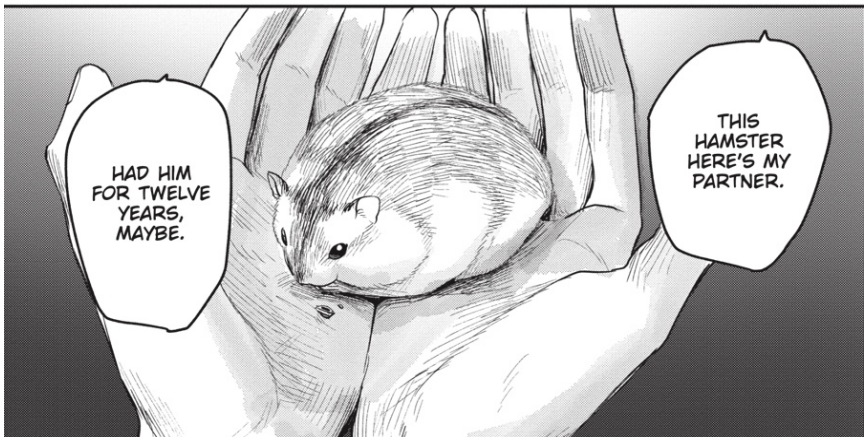
KREE REEREE
KREEREEREE
REEREEE
CHAPTER 19
HUH...?
Y-YES, I AM.
SKRSH
SKRSH
SO ABOUT THIS VILLAGE...

ジジジ

WHAT'S THE LOCAL SPECIALTY AROUND HERE?
HUH ...?
UH...
L-LOCAL SPE-CIALTY?
KREEREE
リーリーっ
YEAH.
REEREEE
リーリー
REEREE
リーリー
SH-SHIITAKE MUSH-ROOMS, I THINK...
リーリーリっ
KREEREEREE
AHH, THAT SO?
BUT I'M NOT A BIG FAN OF SHIITAKE, Y'KNOW?
DON'T THEY KINDA TASTE LIKE THEY'RE SOAKED IN SPIT?
YOU LIKE 'EM?
リーリーっ
KREEREE

I'M A FOLKLORIST.
I'M HERE RESEARCHING THIS SETTLEMENT.
I DON'T HATE THEM, BUT...
HUH...?
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, KID?
I'M STAYING AT THE MIKASAS' PLACE WHILE I'M HERE...
A FOLKLORIST...? HE AIN'T A YOUTUBER OR SOMETHIN'?
TSUJINAKA... I LIVE RIGHT OVER THERE...

AHH...
I SEE.
WELL, TSUJI-NAKA-KUN. THANKS.
I'LL TRY EATING SOME WITHOUT BEING PICKY ABOUT IT.


HAD HIM FOR TWELVE YEARS, MAYBE.
THIS HAMSTER HERE'S MY PARTNER.

THIS GUY'S SPECIAL.
HE'S A GOBLIN HAMSTER.
WHAT... NO WAY...DON'T HAMSTERS ONLY LIVE FOR, LIKE, TWO OR THREE YEARS...?
...WELL, UH, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
OH, SORRY. HE POOPED ON YOU.
I MIGHT'VE MADE HIM NERVOUS. SORRY.
.....

THOSE MARKS ON HIS ARM...
ひょい
レイチェ
HEY, KID. YOU REMIND ME OF MYSELF, Y'KNOW?
WELL, SEE YOU AROUND.
.....

BUT HAVE I MET HIM SOMEWHERE BEFORE...? MM, NAH...
THAT GUY WAS WEIRD...
HE'S MIXED, HUH?
THAT KID...
...HAS SOMETHING ON HIM.

NAH, HE COULDN'T BE.
IS HE NOUNUKI-SAMA?
AND HE'S DEFINITELY BEEN IN CONTACT WITH IT.
BUT HE'S CARRYING SOMETHING STRONGLY RELATED TO IT.
THE INDOU BOY— THE ONE WHO WENT MISSING. I'M SURE HE'S INVOLVED IN THIS SOMEHOW...
THERE'RE ONLY TWO HIGH SCHOOL-AGED KIDS IN THIS SETTLEMENT.

IT'S MORE OF A CON-CEPTUAL THING.
BUT "IT" DOESN'T HAVE FEELINGS, OR EVEN A SENSE OF SELF.
.....
IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE FOR IT TO JUST...
...LIVE A NORMAL LIFE IN HUMAN FORM?
...WILL MY HUNTING DOG FIND IT SOON ENOUGH...?

YER REAL FOND OF ANIMALS, AREN'T YA?
AN' YOU DON'T LIKE 'EM MUCH, HUH?
I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT 'EM.
I MEAN, THEY AIN'T FRIENDLY WITH ME.
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE I LIKE 'EM 'COS THEY'RE FRIENDLY WITH ME.
I LIKE HOW THEY LIVE BY RULES THAT HAVE NOTHIN' TO DO WITH HUMANS.
OHH, SO YA LIKE THEIR WAY OF LIVIN'?
YEAH.
I EVEN LIKE ANIMALS THAT EAT AN' KILL PEOPLE.

SOUNDS LIKE YA JUST HATE PEOPLE, THEN!
AH!
HUH?
WHAT'RE YOU CRYIN' FOR?
HN?
OH.
YOSHIKI. YOU'RE AWAKE.

WHATEVER.
CRUMPLED
HERE'S A HANKIE...
GAB
ANYWAY... YER ARM OKAY?
IT SUCKS!
GAB
ALL RIGHT.
EUGH. IT'S SO DIRTY.
I DON'T NEED IT...
HOW'D YOU WIND UP BREAKIN' IT?

SOUNDS PRETTY WILD...
.....
AHH, WELL... ONE OF THE SENIORS SORTA LOST IT AND WENT ON A RAMPAGE IN OUR CLUB-ROOM...
NO ONE'S REALLY TALKIN' ABOUT IT, THOUGH.
MAKI'S ALWAYS BEEN SERIOUS ABOUT THE BASEBALL TEAM...
DING-DONG
DING-DONG
CLUNK ガタン
CLACK ガタッ
SCRATCH ガシ
SCRATCH ガシ
...IT'S COM-PLETELY UNBELIEV-ABLE.
AND NOW I CAN'T PLAY IN THE TOURNAMENT. BUNCHA BULLSHIT...

SO, WITH END-OF-TERM EXAMS COMING UP SOON...
...ALL OF YOU...
...SHOULD BE REVIEWING YOUR LESSONS...
ESPECIALLY YOUR TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE VERBS ...
BLAH...
BLAH...

NOUNUKI-SAMA... I STILL KNOW NEXT TO NOTHIN' 'BOUT WHATEVER IT IS.
HAJIME'S FATHER...
WHY DON'T YOU TRY ASKIN' OLD MAN TAKEDA?
HE'S AROUND MY MOMMA'S AGE, AN' ALL...
カチ CLICK
カチ CLICK
DID HIKARU'S DADDY...
...KNOW SOME-THIN'?
EVEN IF I VISITED HIS HOUSE, I DOUBT HE'D TAKE ME SERIOUSLY.
WHAT SHOULD I DO...?
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
HAAH...
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
HMM...?

BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
SOMETHIN'S... COMIN' THIS WAY...

AH.

DON'T LOOK. DON'T LOOK
DON'T LOOK. DON'T LOOK
DON'T LOOK. DON'T LOOK
DON'T LOOK. DON'T LOOK
HIKARU...!
IT'S HERE.
ANOTHER MONSTER.
DON'T LOOK.
DON'T LOOK.
CLACK
THE HECK IS THAT?
THNK
HUH?
WAIT...
THAT'S WILD!
SCAMPER
SCAMPER
HUH!?
YO-SHIKI.

EEEEK!!
HUH!? NO WAY!
IT'S...
...A PERSON.

SELF-STUDY
SO THAT WEIRD GUY FROM BEFORE...I HEARD HE SLIT HIS OWN THROAT WITH A KNIFE HE WAS HIDIN' ON 'IM...
YOSHINAGA-SENSEI GOT CUT TOO AN' HAD TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL.
GUESS WE'RE ALL GOIN' HOME FOR THE DAY, THEN, RIGHT?
THAT WEIRD GUY...
...GOT SOMETHIN' IN 'IM.
ASA-KO.

YEAH, SOMETHIN' SCARY.
LIKE, INSIDE 'IM... YOU KNOW ...
...POS-SES-SION?
GAB
IN 'IM?
GAB
I CAN'T SEE IT, BUT I CAN JUST SORTA SENSE WHEN SOMETHIN'S "ENTERED" A PERSON.
IT'S BEEN HAPPENIN' MORE OFTEN LATELY...
YOU ALL RIGHT, HIKARU?
ME?
GAB
YER DOWNRIGHT STUFFED...

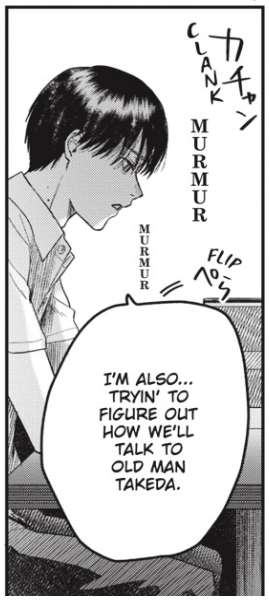
I SEE...
I MUST HAVE A RESISTANCE TO THEM EVIL SPIRITS. WONDER WHY THAT IS...
HUH? HA-HA-HA!
I'M RIGHT AS RAIN!
IT'S EVEN REACHED THE SCHOOL NOW.
HEY...
WHAT IF SOMETHIN' HAPPENS TO EVERYONE?
AND I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO DO ANYTHIN' ABOUT IT...
ASA-KO...

WHAT SHOULD WE DO...?
THERE'RE MORE AND MORE OF THOSE IMPURITIES OUT THERE.
EVEN ASAKO'S NOTICED.
WE'RE DOIN' RESEARCH TO FIGURE THAT OUT, AREN'T WE?
IF IT COMES DOWN TO IT, I'LL—
ズキッ
THROB
.....
WHAT?
NAH, JUST MY ARM...

I GOT PUSHED EARLIER AND WHACKED IT ON A DESK.
ごんっ
THUNK
...IT GOT BRUISED UP.
HUH !?
Y'ALL RIGHT? I'LL GIVE YA A COOLING PATCH.
NAH, I'M GOOD...
PAIN...?
I'VE HARDLY EVER FELT IT BEFORE...

MURMUR
カチャン CLANK
CASUAL DINER AMERICA
DING-DONG
CLANK カチャ
MURMUR
AND SO THEN...
I HAVE AN ORDER FOR TABLE 8!
WELCOME!

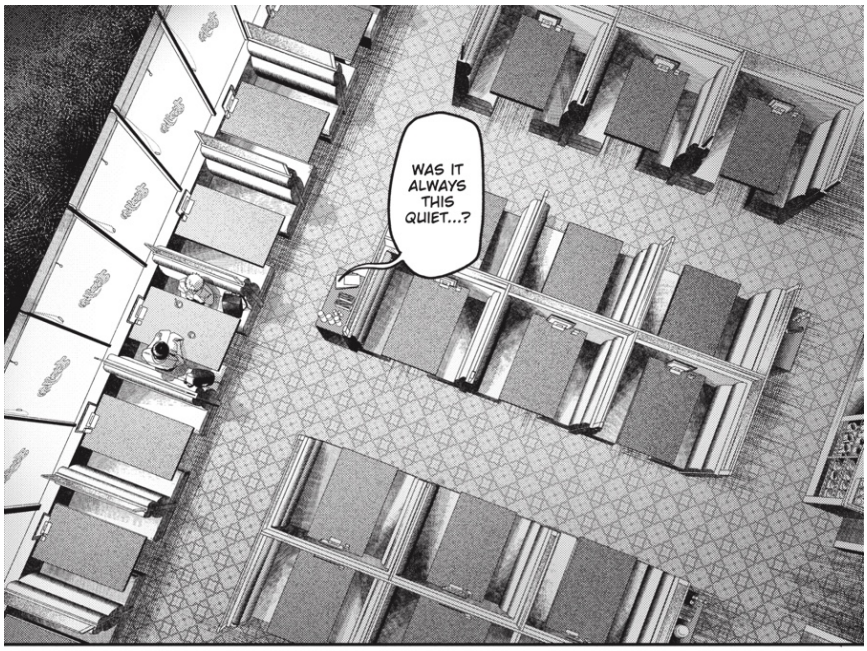
...HEY, SO...
...YER KEEPIN' MY FRAGMENT SAFE, RIGHT?
KICK ドレッ

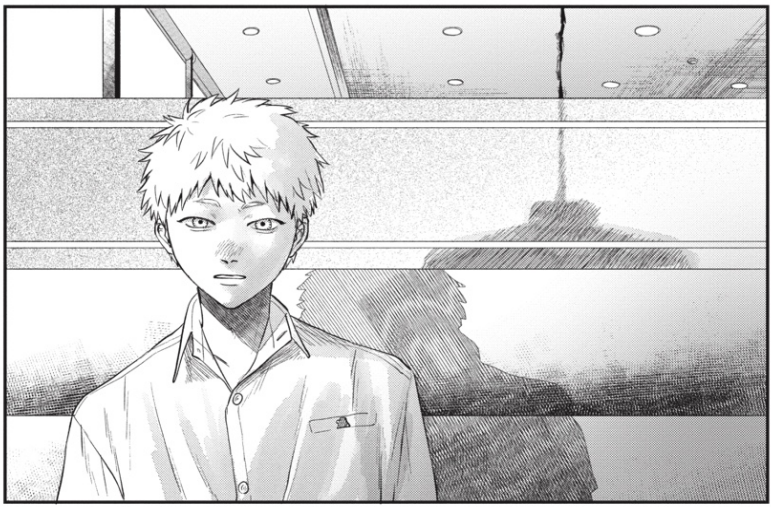

カチャン CLANK
MURMUR
MURMUR
FLIP ペラ
I'M ALSO... TRYIN' TO FIGURE OUT HOW WE'LL TALK TO OLD MAN TAKEDA.

カチャン CLANK
IS THIS REALLY THE TIME TO BE STUDYIN'!?

I ALWAYS KEEP IT CLOSE TO ME.
MURMUR
カチャン CLANK
YEAH, GOT IT HERE.
HERE YOU GO!
MURMUR
I PROLLY WON'T BE OKAY IF THAT THING BREAKS.
DING-DONG ピンポーン
MURMUR
カチャン CLANK カチャ TNK
DON'T EVER LOSE IT, YA HEAR?
MURMUR
MURMUR
COURSE IT IS...SHOWS THAT I'M SERIOUS 'BOUT THIS...
BUT I MIGHT GO BACK TO NORMAL IF IT'S RETURNED TO MY BODY...
カイーヤ CLINK
MURMUR
WHAT!?
IT'S THAT IM-POR-TANT!?

I'LL HAVE TO PUT IT IN A SAFER PLACE...
カタン CLINK
カタン CLANK
BUT I EXPECT...
...THERE AIN'T NO WAY TO BREAK THAT THING ANYHOW.
HAAH...
.....


WAS IT ALWAYS THIS QUIET...?

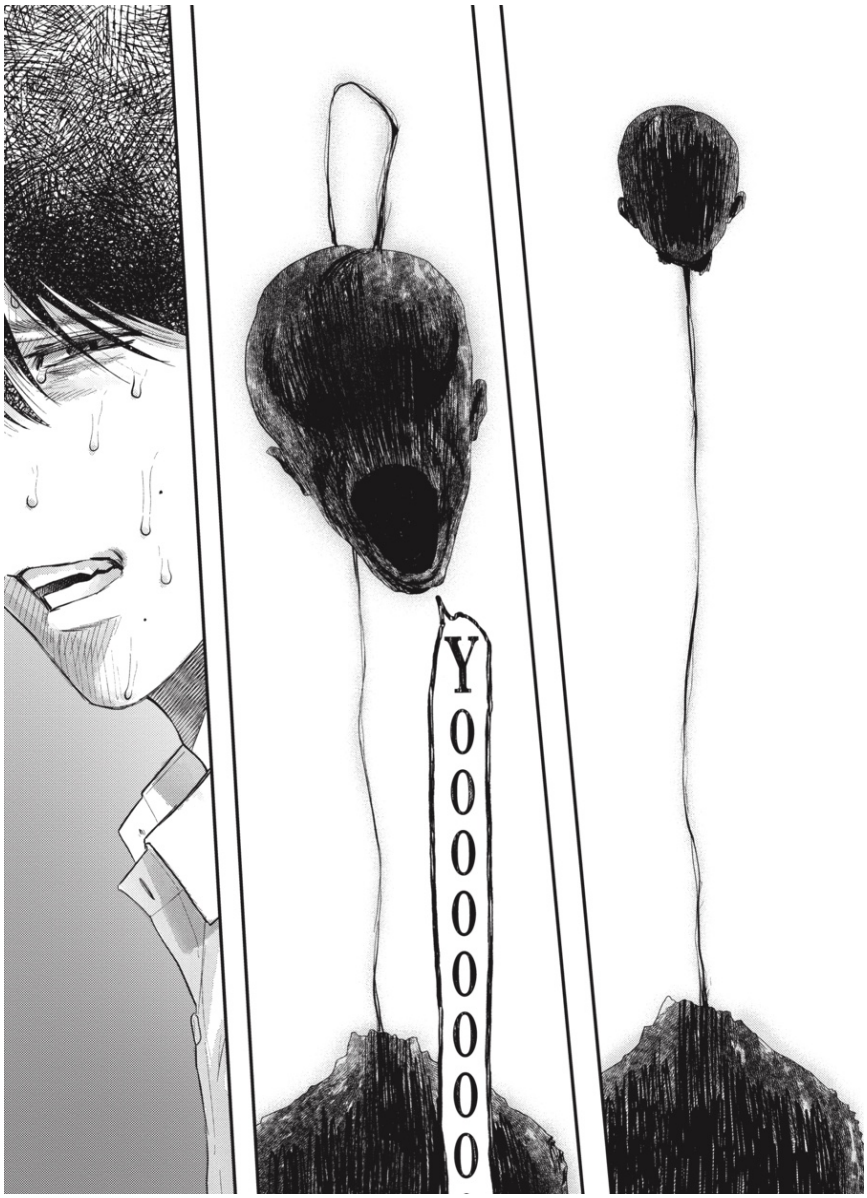


WHA...?
JINGLE
THE SOUND OF A BELL...?
JINGLE
JINGLE
WAH!
AH!
AAAH!

GRAB
ガレ
YO-
SHIKI.
DON'T
MOVE.
COME.
JINGLE
COME.
JINGLE
COME.
H—
COME.
JINGLE
COME.
JINGLE

I CAN'T DO IT...
NO.
ぼたっ
SPLAT
YEEK...
DASH
...NH!!!

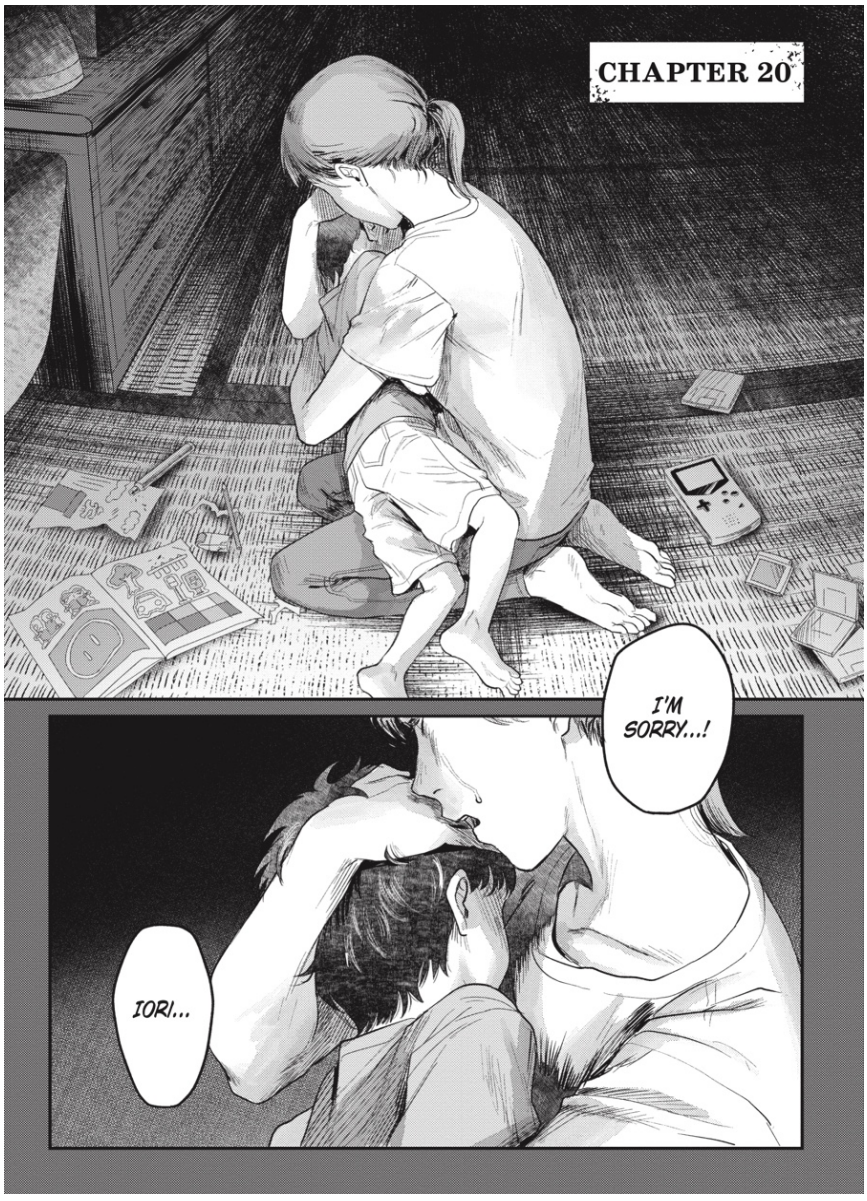
HAAH!
HFF!
HI-KARU ...!
JINGLE
CLINK
RATTLE
IT WON'T OPEN ...!
WHY !?


YOOOOOOOOO

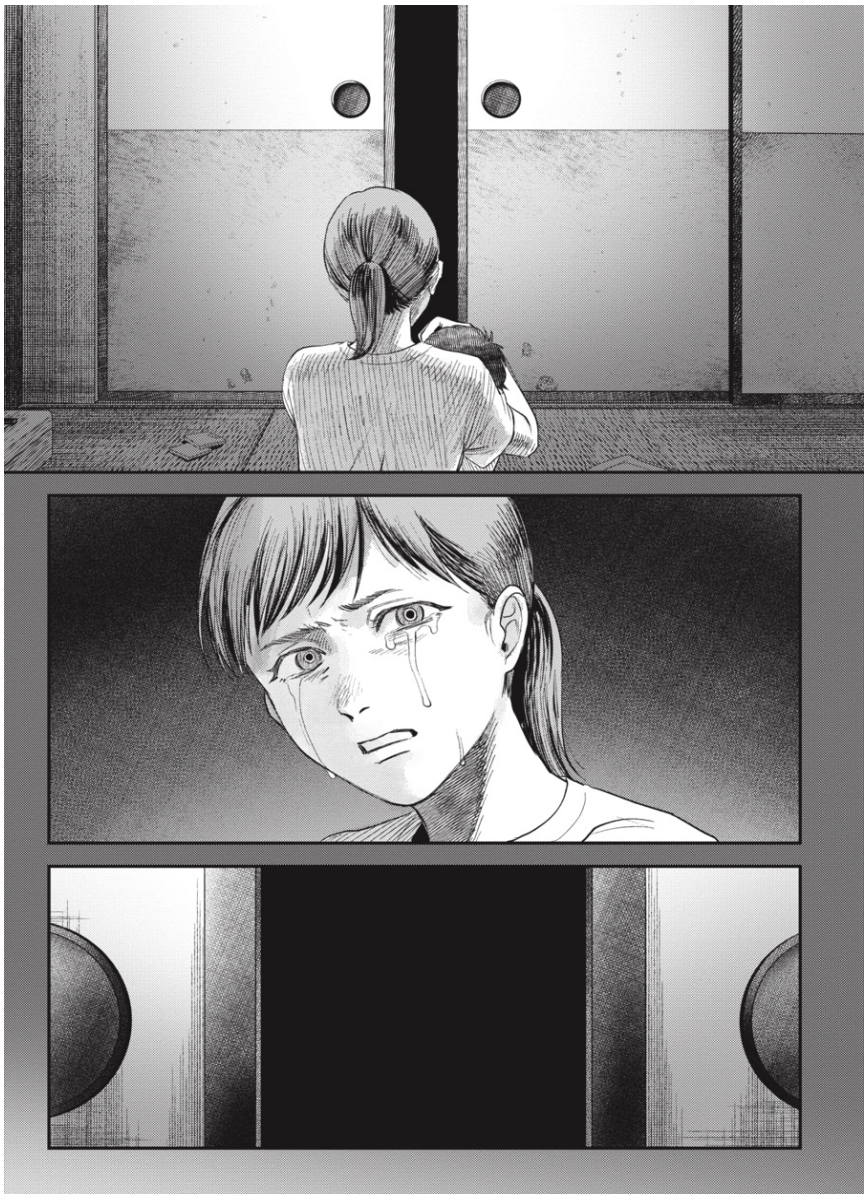
SPLUSH
.....
COME ON. GET UP.

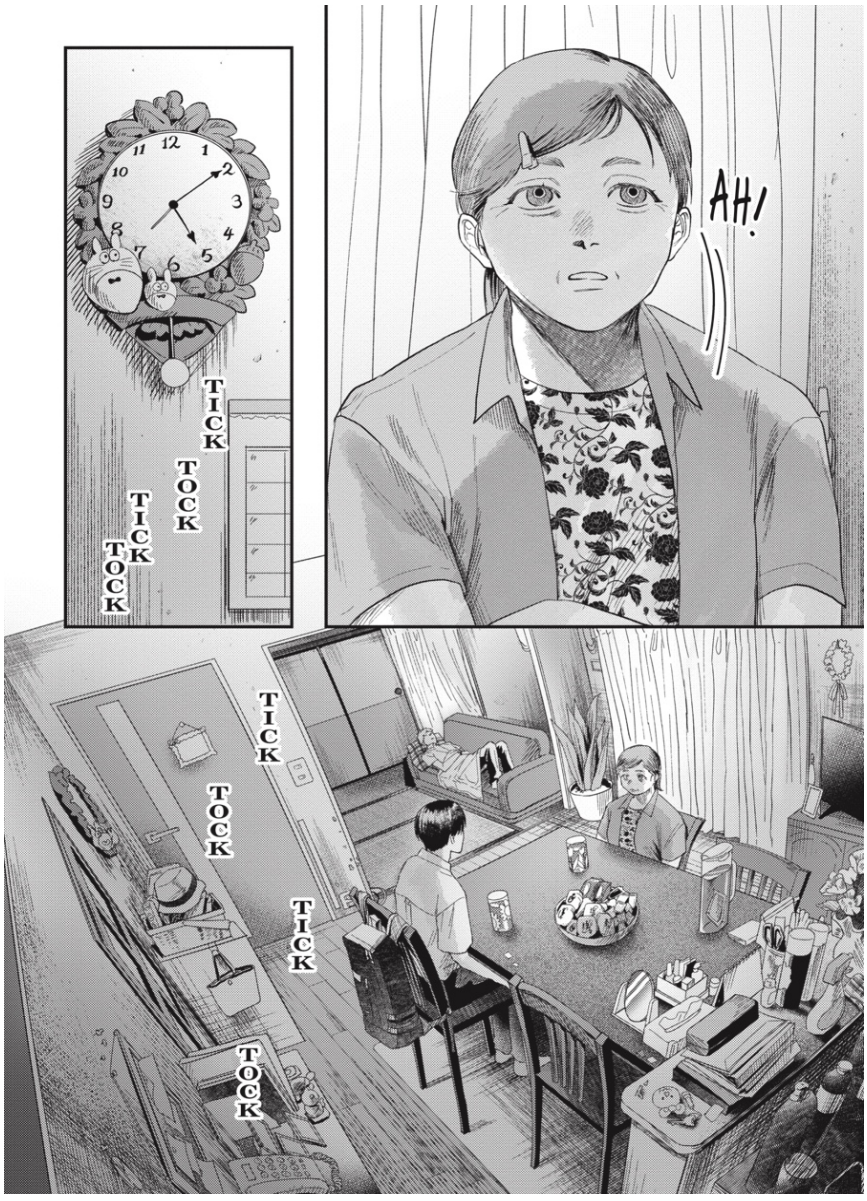
ピンポーン DING-DONG
IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW.
TSUJI-NAKA-KUN.
カチャン CLANK
MURMUR
カチャ CLINK
MA'AM...
MURMUR
CHAPTER 19 END

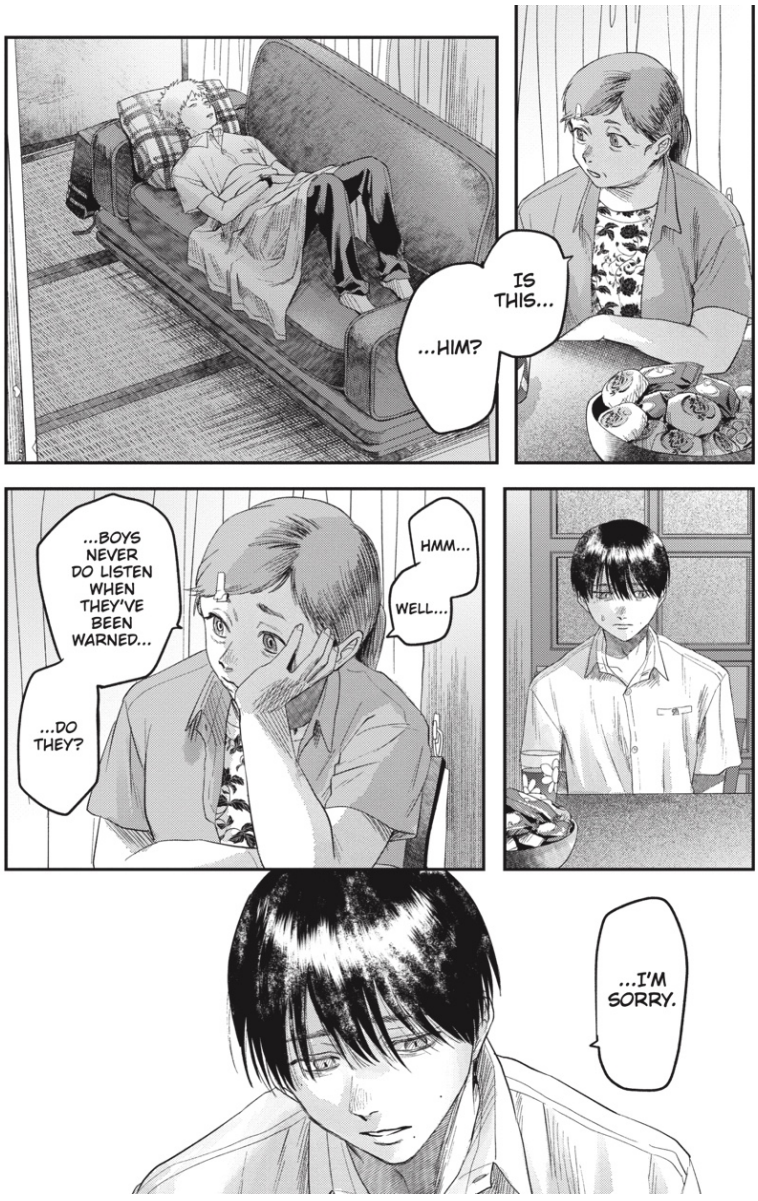
DUE TO CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, TANAKA'S HAMSTER HOUSES THE SOUL OF A HUMAN CHILD. ITS CONSCIOUSNESS IS THAT OF A HAMSTER, BUT THE SOUL ALLOWS IT TO DETECT ENTITIES NOT OF THIS WORLD.


CHAPTER 20
I'M SORRY...!
IORI...

UNGH...
THIS IS MOMMA'S FAULT.
DOES IT HURT?
MOMMA WAS WRONG.
I SHOULD'VE KNOWN, AND YET...
I KNEW IT...




TICK
TOCK
TICK
TOCK
AH!
TICK
TOCK
TICK
TOCK


IS THIS...
...HIM?
HMM...
WELL...
...BOYS NEVER DO LISTEN WHEN THEY'VE BEEN WARNED...
...DO THEY?
...I'M SORRY.

NO... I'M SORRY TOO.
WOULDN'TA THOUGHT HE'D BE A REGULAR KID LIKE THIS...
UM...
THANK YOU FOR EARLIER.
.....
YER WEL-COME.
LUCKY I HAPPENED TO BE AROUND.
BUT WHY WAS THAT THIN' THERE...?

UH.
UM.
WHAT EXACTLY WAS IT?
THAT THING FROM BEFORE...
...WAS SOMETHIN' LIKE A CURSE. IT WAS MAKIN' USE OF AN ANCIENT AND POWERFUL IMPURITY.
SOMEONE MUST'VE DUG UP AN OLD GRAVE TO CREATE IT.
SOMETHIN' LIKE A "STAIN"... OR "IMPURITY"?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "IMPURITY" ...?
ボポポポ
LUCKILY, I WAS ABLE TO DRIVE IT AWAY...
OR MAYBE MORE LIKE, IT RETREATED ON ITS OWN.

...IT'S SOMETHIN' LIKE A "GHOST" OR "SPIRIT"...
TO PUT IT SIMPLY...

BUT WHEN THERE'S A DISTORTION, THAT VEIL RIPS.
AND THINGS COME OUT.
ALL I CAN DO IS SEND BACK THE STUFF THAT'S COME OUT...
...AND CLOSE SMALL HOLES.
...IS A THIN VEIL.
THIS WORLD AN' THE OTHER SIDE ARE REAL CLOSE TO EACH OTHER. ONLY THING KEEPIN' 'EM APART...
THE SOULS AN' EMOTIONS OF THE DEAD PASS THROUGH THAT VEIL...
...AN' THE GODS ON THE OTHER SIDE LET THEM BE REBORN IN THIS WORLD.

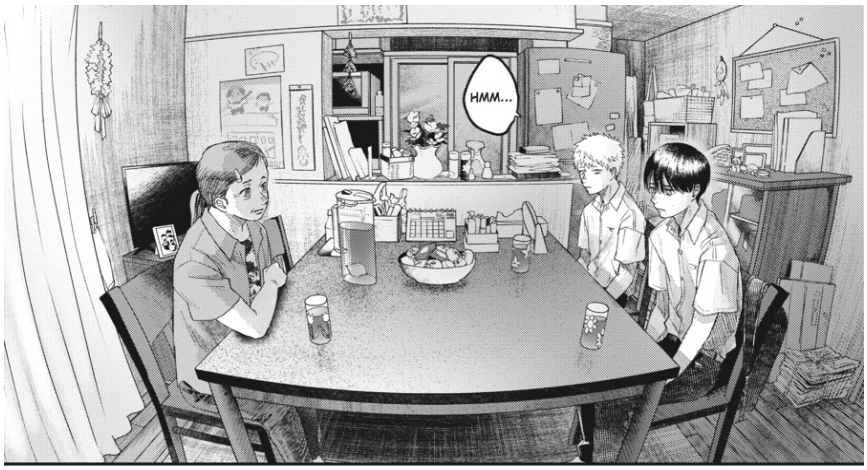
I...
...DON'T QUITE GET IT...
...BUT OKAY.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME— SEEIN' AS I'M NO GOD.
BUT I CAN'T DESTROY 'EM...
IT'S LIKE, AH— WHAT'S IT CALLED...?
THAT NEEDLE-Y THING AT THE TOP OF A BUILDIN'...
A LIGHT-NING ROD?
YEAH, THAT.
THAT BOY THERE...
...SEEMS TO REALLY DRAW IN THOSE IMPURI-TIES.
AND SO DO YOU.

BUT THERE'S BEEN ALL KINDS OF ACCIDENTS AN' INCIDENTS THESE DAYS...IT'S AWFUL.
THAT'S PROLLY WHY THE TOWNS AN' SETTLEMENTS WERE SAFE.
WHEN HE WAS IN THE MOUNTAINS, HE ATTRACTED IMPURITIES THERE LIKE A LIGHTNIN' ROD.
IT'S EXACTLY LIKE THAT.
YEAH...
BUT IT'S AWFULLY STRANGE FOR THERE TO BE THIS MANY IMPURITIES.
SO IT'S NOT HIKA-RU...
IS THAT WHAT YER SAY-ING?
THE ACCIDENTS AND THINGS ARE CAUSED BY THE IMPURI-TIES...
PEEL
...BUT HAVIN' THIS MUCH AROUND AIN'T GOOD.
THEY AREN'T ALWAYS BAD...

I WONDER IF THAT STRONG PRESENCE I FELT FROM THE MOUNTAINS...
FLAP
...WAS REALLY JUST HIM...
.....
HUH...? WHERE AM I?
YO-SHIKI?
HI-KARU.

NO...
THANK GOOD-NESS.
YOU AREN'T HURT?
BANNER: LIVE TODAY WITH GRATITUDE
HEY.
...WHO'S THAT? WHO IS SHE?
YO-SHIKI ...
UH.
DOES SHE...
DOES SHE KNOW?
YOU TOLD HER ABOUT ME?

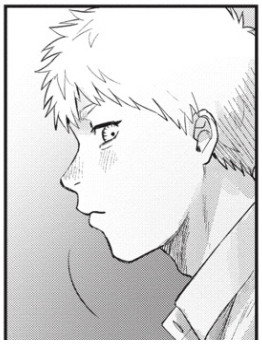
...YEAH. SHE NOTICED... OR IT'S MORE LIKE...
AN' EVEN IF I WANTED TO, I COULDN'T.
HOW 'BOUT Y'ALL SIT HERE WITH ME FOR NOW?
I AIN'T PLANNIN' ON DOIN' NOTHIN' TO Y'ALL.


HMM...

IT'S DIF-FER-ENT NOW.
TOTALLY DIFFER-ENT.

SO YOU...
...DIDN'T TRUST ME AT ALL, DID YA?
...MAKES SENSE, I GUESS.

JUST WHO ARE YA, LADY?



I'M JUST A HOUSE-WIFE.
HM?
BACK AT THE RESTAURANT... WHY COULDN'T I DEFEAT THAT THING?
WITH THE WAY I AM NOW, YOSHIKI'LL...
WAS THIS LADY ABLE TO DO IT?

I KNOW!
I WON'T HURT HER. I MEAN, CAN'T EVEN IF I TRIED.
HIKARU.
COME NOW, HIKARU, GO ON AN' EAT SOME. IT'S TASTY.
IT'S NOTHIN' BUT SWEETS...
THEY'RE SHIITAKE BUNS.
SHIITAKE BUN
SHIITAKE BUN

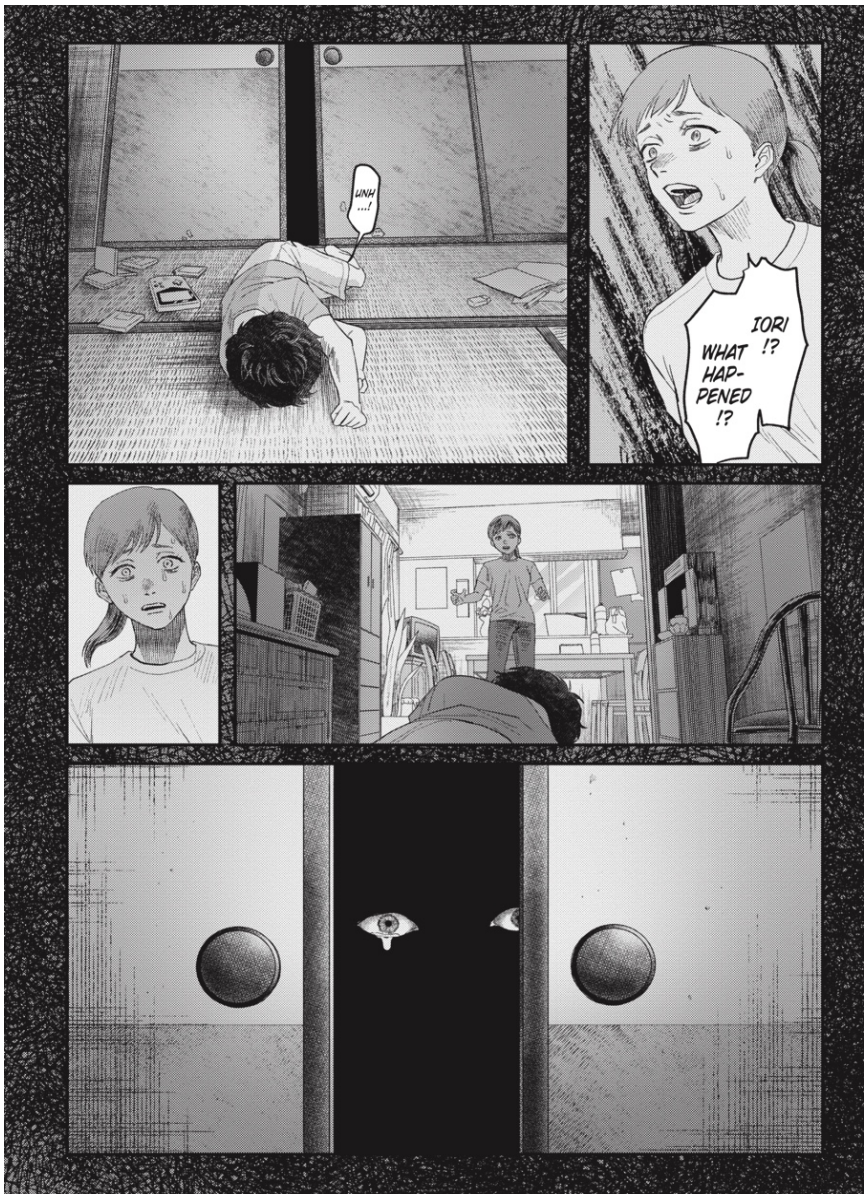
SHOVE
ドーン
HEY...!! DON'T GO EATIN' UP ALL OF SOMEONE'S BUNS IN THEIR OWN HOME...
MMPH.
THE HECK ...!?
DANG, THAT'S GOOD!
SNATCH
ひょい
HEY.
HI-KARU-KUN.
WHAT EXACTLY ARE YA?

YA KNOW...
EVEN I DUNNO...
BEATS ME...
A LONG TIME AGO, MY DEAD HUSBAND CAME BACK JUST LIKE YA DID.
I KNEW SOME-ONE LIKE YOU...
MOMMA?
HEY.

WHY D'YA MAKE SUPPER FOR DADDY WHEN HE AIN'T AROUND NO MORE?
BUT YER DADDY... ...IS AROUND.
HM?
HE'S IN THERE.

ABOUT YER PUDDIN'...
SHUT
I'M HOME...

GUESS WHAT, MOMMA?
DADDY...
SST
...MADE MY POKÉMEN STRONG!
AND THEN...
OH?
THAT'S GREAT.
I KNOW THIS CAN'T LAST FOREVER, BUT IF WE COULD JUST...
...CONTINUE LIKE THIS A LITTLE LONGER...
WAAAH!!
AH!

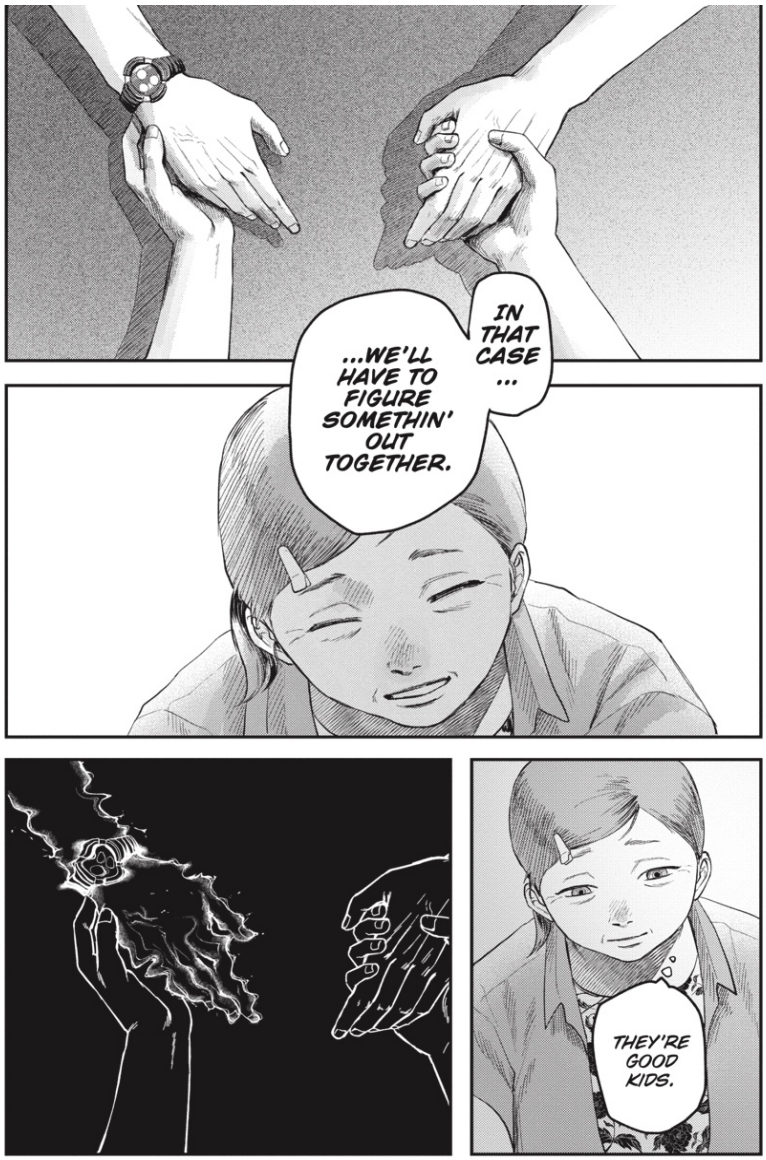

UNH ...!
IORI !?
WHAT HAP-PENED !?

I'M...NO IMPURITY. AT LEAST, I DON'T THINK I AM.
I'M SOMETHIN' ELSE ENTIRELY...
...BUT HE WAS IN A REAL STATE COMPARED TO YA, HIKARU-KUN.
THERE'S NO DOUBT IT WAS MY HUSBAND'S SOUL...
...BUT THAT THING WAS NOTHIN' MORE THAN AN IMPURITY THROUGH AN' THROUGH...
UM...
DO YA KNOW ABOUT NOUNUKI-SAMA...?
NOU-NUKI-SAMA?
FOR YOU, IT'S LIKE...
...YER OUTSIDE THE CYCLE OF REBIRTH.
YER MORE... INCOMPRE-HENSIBLE... Y'KNOW?

HEY...
OH, I SEE...
SORRY, I DUNNO 'BOUT THAT.
IF THE IMPURITIES KEEP GROWIN' LIKE THIS...
...A LOTTA PEOPLE WILL DIE.
WHAT DO Y'ALL WANNA DO ABOUT THIS?

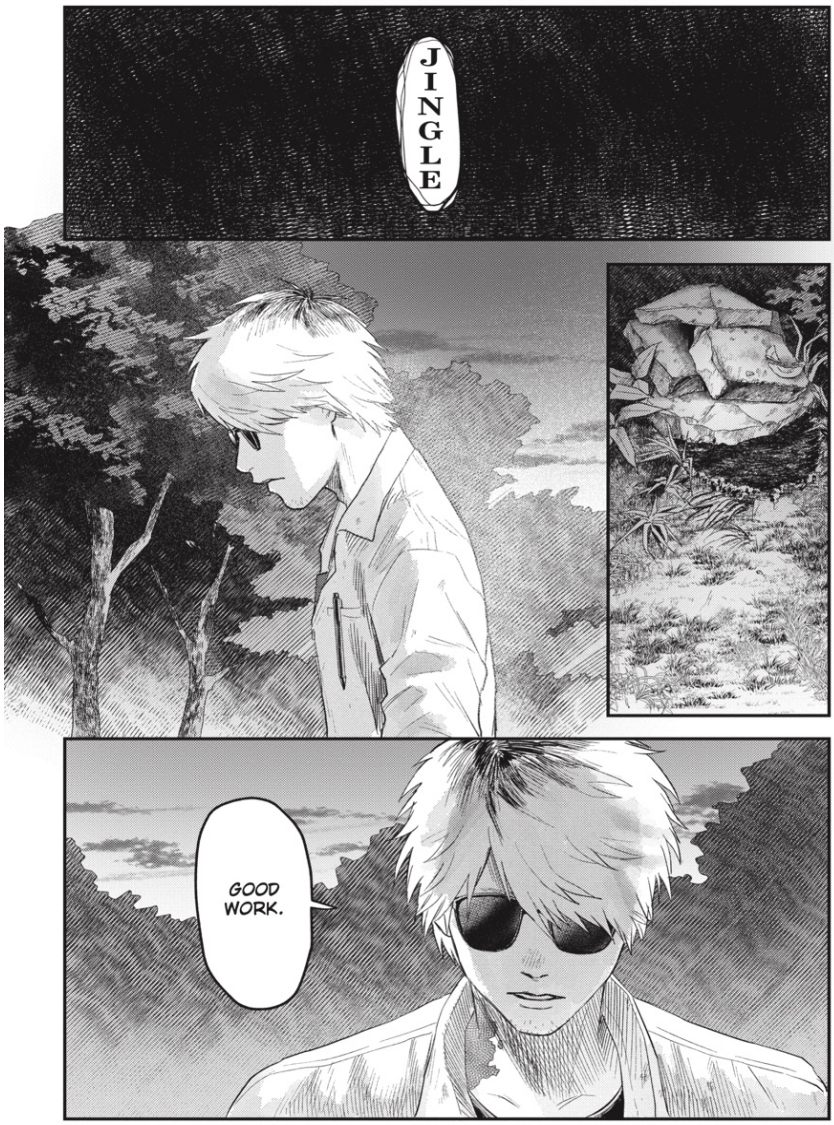
I DON'T REALLY GET HOW VALUABLE A LIFE CAN BE.
I COULD LEAVE ALL OF THIS AN' RUN AWAY.
BUT YOSHIKI WOULD NEVER DO THAT.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOSHIKI...IS IMPORTANT TO ME TOO...
I...

I FINALLY FOUND A SPECIAL PLACE FOR ME...
...SO I WANNA PROTECT IT.
I SEE.
...AND I CAN'T JUST IGNORE THAT PEOPLE WILL DIE BECAUSE OF THAT.
...I'VE DECIDED TO FOLLOW HIM WHEREVER HE GOES...


IN THAT CASE ...
...WE'LL HAVE TO FIGURE SOMETHIN' OUT TOGETHER.
THEY'RE GOOD KIDS.

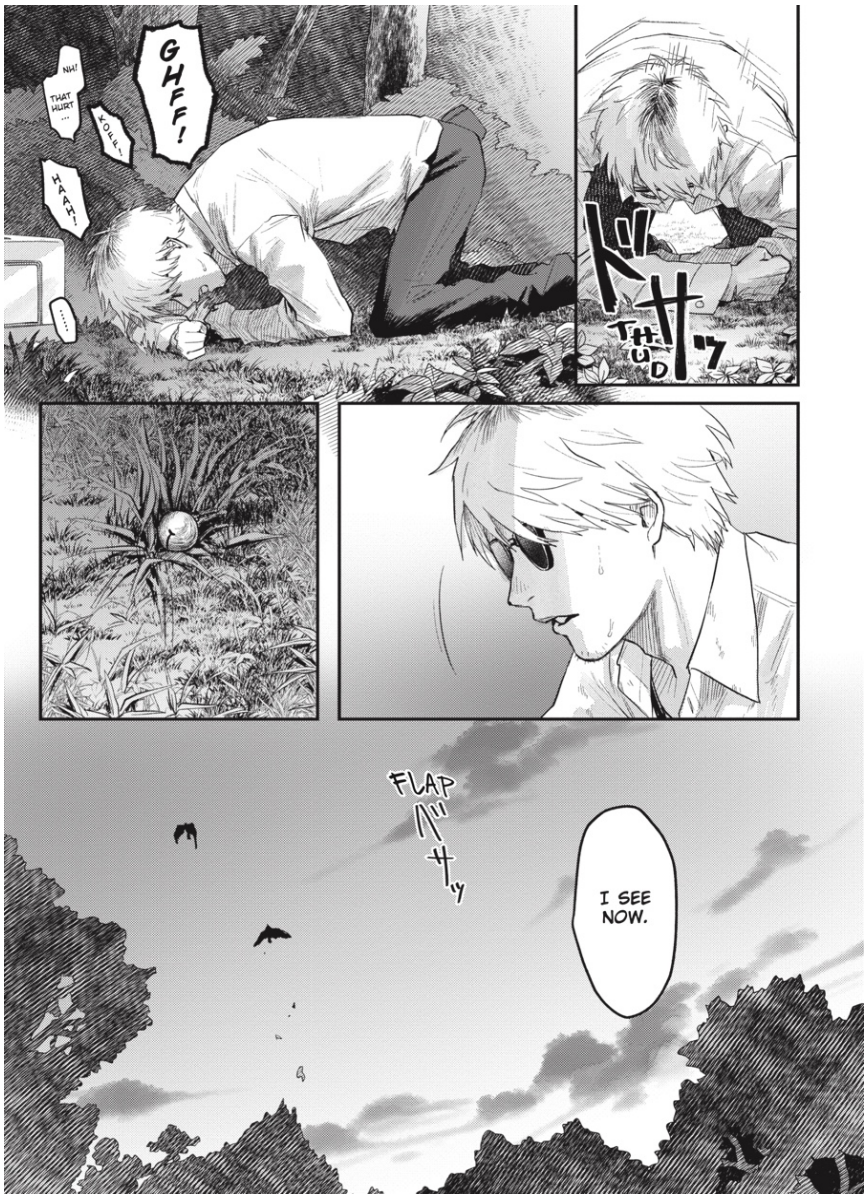
OKAY.
OH!
WAIT, MY SHOES.
GO ON AHEAD.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
ガチャ
WATCH OUT FOR CARS ON THE WAY HOME.
ALL RIGHT.
SHUT バタン
HIKARU-KUN.
TMP トン
TMP トン
YA...
...CAN'T LET TSUJINAKA-KUN GET ANY MORE MIXED THAN HE ALREADY IS, OKAY?
YA KNOW THAT, RIGHT...?

TSUJI-NAKA-KUN...
...WON'T BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THE HUMAN WORLD.
THROB
ズキ...

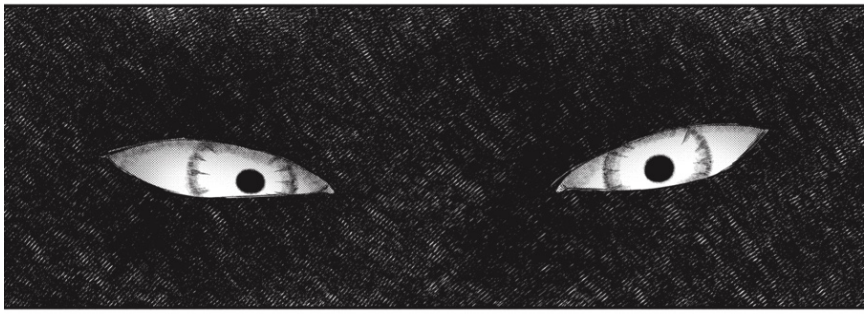

JINGLE
GOOD WORK.

JINGLE
BOOM

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAAAAAA

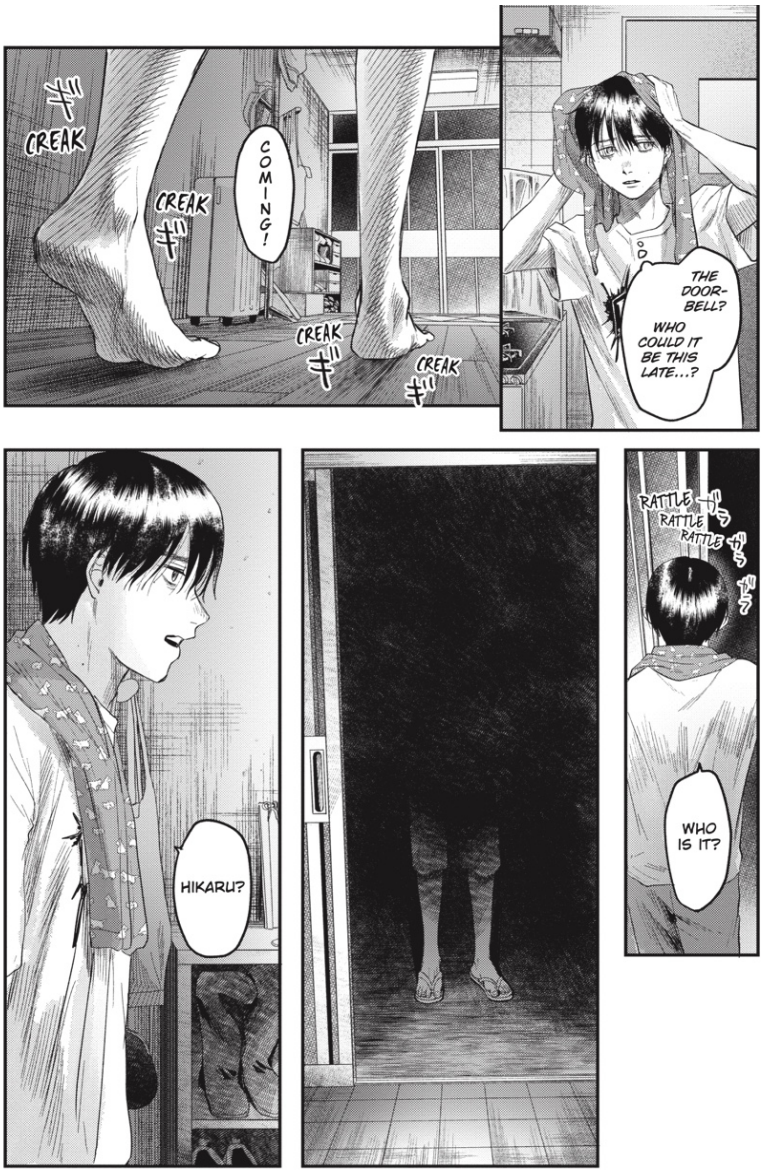

GHFF!
NH! THAT HURT ...
KOFF!
HAAH!
.....
THUD
FLAP
I SEE NOW.

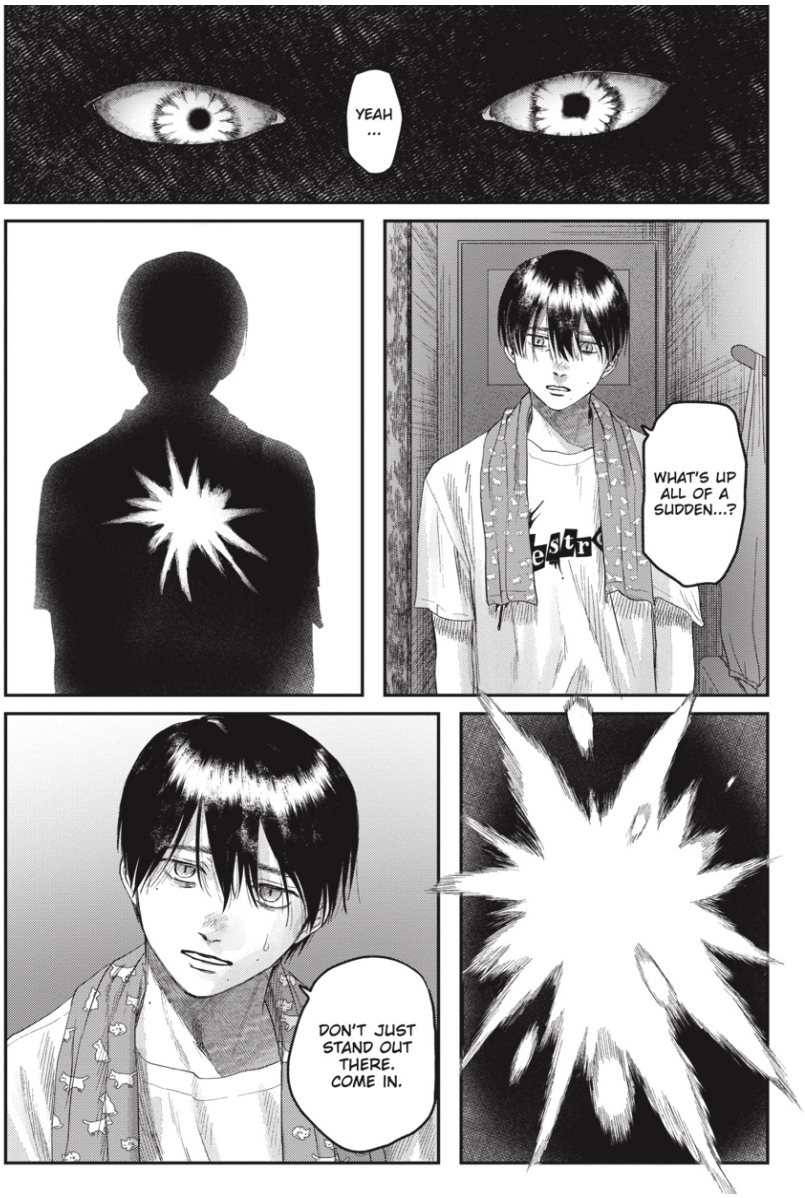
REEREEREE
KREEREEREE



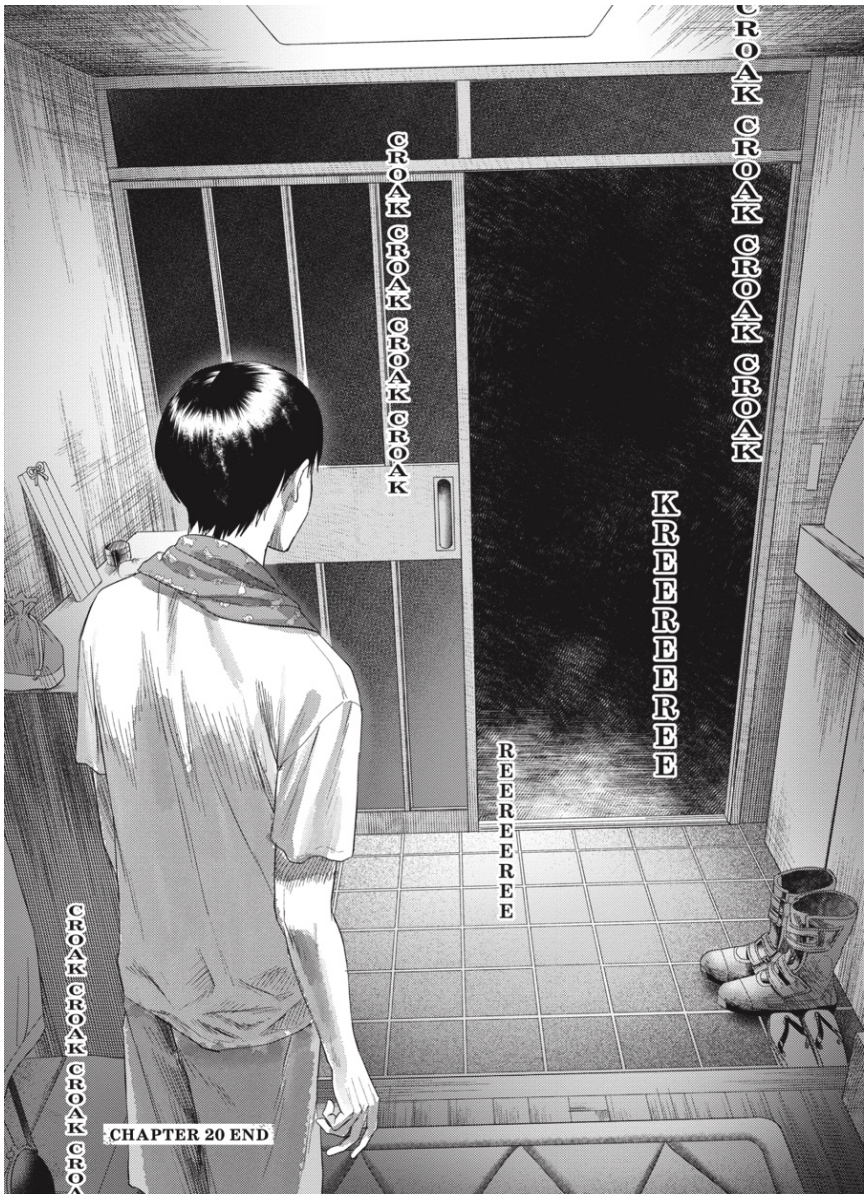
SKRSH
SKRSH
SKRSH

DING-DONG


CREAK
CREAK
COMING!
CREAK
CREAK
THE DOOR-BELL?
WHO COULD IT BE THIS LATE...?
HIKARU?
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
WHO IS IT?


YEAH ...
WHAT'S UP ALL OF A SUDDEN...?
DON'T JUST STAND OUT THERE. COME IN.

SORRY.
I'M GOOD.
SKRSH
SKRSH
SKRSH
.....


CROAK CROAK CROAK CROAK CROAK
KREEREEREE
REEREEREE
CROAK CROAK CROAK CROAK
CROAK CROAK CROAK CROA
CHAPTER 20 END

HIKARU HAS NO PHYSICAL FORM, SO HE NEEDS A CONTAINER (XIPHOID PROCESS).

YOUNG KUREBAYASHI-SAN
SHE'S A HARD WORKER. SINCE HER BIOLOGICAL MOTHER DIED YOUNG, HER STEPMOTHER TAKES CARE OF HER.

CHIRRUP CHIRRUP CHIRRUP
BZZH BZZH BZZH
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
HIRRUP CHIRRUP
CHIRRUP CHIRRUP CHIRRUP
CHIRRUP CHIRRUP CHIRRUP CHIR
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
CHIRRUP CHIRRUP CHIRRUP
CHAPTER 21

CROWLY
CROWLY
CREAM BREAD
CREAM BREAD
AS LONG AS HE'S HERE...
...NO ONE WILL MOURN YA...
SORRY 'BOUT ALL THIS.

FOR-
GETTIN'...
IS WHAT
SCARES
ME THE
MOST.
BUT WITH
HIM AROUND,
I'M HAPPY
'COS I WON'T
FORGET YOU.
WHOA!
USED
TO PLAY
HERE A
BUNCH BACK
IN THE DAY...
'MEMBER?
OH,
CHECK
IT OUT!
DANGER
SO
THIS IS
WHERE
YA
BEEN.
THIS
BRINGS
ME
BACK...

YEAH.
start
IT'S OUR HOMEMADE SUPER MARIO STAGE!
THE ONE WE'D PLAY WITH OUR FINGERS WHILE MAKIN' OUR OWN SOUND EFFECTS.
.....
CROWLY
CREAM BREAD

YER TOTALLY DIFFERENT...
HEY, SO... WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ME AN' HIKARU?
HE WAS MORE CONSIDERATE AN' GROWN-UP...
HARDER TO GET TOO.
HE WAS MORE OF A TROUBLE-MAKER, AND HE LIED A BUNCH.
HE WAS ALSO PRETTY SLICK.
...HE'S NEVER COMING BACK.
SO YER NOT THE SAME.
AND...
.....
...DIDJA LIKE 'IM?

IT'S JUST ...
NO REASON, REALLY...
NAH.
...WHY YA ASKIN'?
...YOU TURNED AWAY WHEN YOU SAW ME SHIRTLESS BEFORE...
FWIP
I MEAN ...
WHAT WAS ALL THAT... ... ABOUT ...?
...I DON'T WANNA SAY.
...WHY NOT?

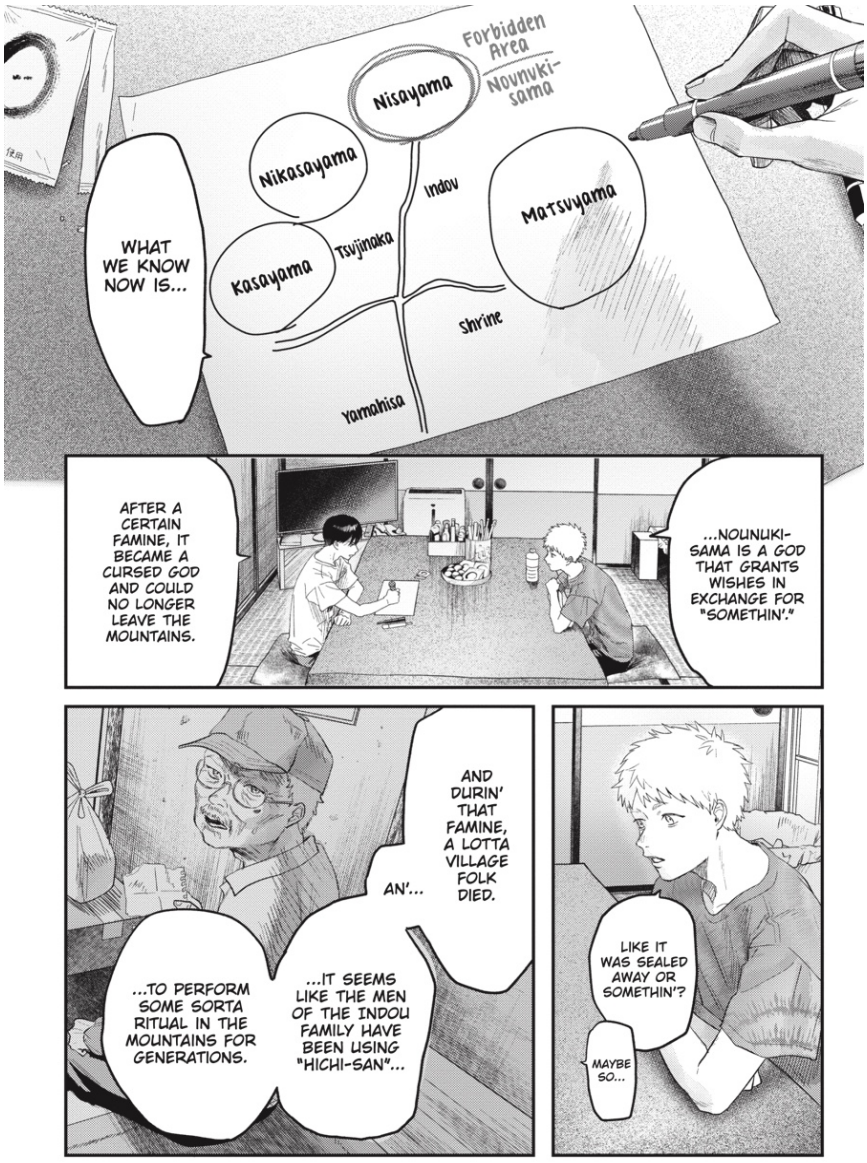
...NOW WHEN I LOOK AT YOUR BODY, I DON'T THINK NOTHIN' OF IT.
BESIDES... I DON'T THINK...
...YA NEED TO UNDERSTAND THOSE SORTS OF FEELINGS.

'COS AT A BASIC LEVEL, I'M...
...COM-PLETELY DIFFERENT FROM HUMANS.
...I MEAN, IT'S TRUE. "THOSE SORTS OF FEELINGS" ARE SOME-THING... I DON'T HAVE.
...THE HECK IS ALL THAT?
AND...
WE HAVE OUR OWN THINGS. THINGS THAT EXIST JUST BETWEEN ME AN' YOU.
...YOU DON'T NEED TO BE HUMAN, ANYWAY.

ACTUALLY, I PREFER THAT YA DON'T BECOME HUMAN.
HUH ...?
GRAB
WAIT!
REALLY ...?

WE'RE DIFFERENT BEINGS IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY.
THERE'S NO WAY WE COULD UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING ABOUT EACH OTHER.
I WON'T FORCE HIM TO FIT IN WITH HUMANS...
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN...
...BUT IF THERE WERE A PLACE WHERE HE COULD LIVE IN HIS OWN WAY...
...IT'S OKAY FOR HIM TO KILL PEOPLE AS LONG AS HE'S HERE.

...GIVE UP EVERYTHING.
FOR THAT, I'D...
CHIRRUP CHIRRUP BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
CHIRRUP CHIRRUP BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
CHIRRUP CHIRRUP BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
CHIRRUP CHIRRUP BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
SHF
Nisoyama
Matsuyama


Forbidden Area
Nounuki-sama
Nisayama
Nikasayama
Indou
Matsuyama
Tsujinaka
Kasayama
Shrine
Yamahisa
WHAT WE KNOW NOW IS...
AFTER A CERTAIN FAMINE, IT BECAME A CURSED GOD AND COULD NO LONGER LEAVE THE MOUNTAINS.
...NOUNUKI-SAMA IS A GOD THAT GRANTS WISHES IN EXCHANGE FOR "SOMETHIN'."
AND DURIN' THAT FAMINE, A LOTTA VILLAGE FOLK DIED.
AN'...
...IT SEEMS LIKE THE MEN OF THE INDOU FAMILY HAVE BEEN USING "HICHI-SAN"...
...TO PERFORM SOME SORTA RITUAL IN THE MOUNTAINS FOR GENERATIONS.
LIKE IT WAS SEALED AWAY OR SOMETHIN'?
MAYBE SO...

'COS YOU DID A SLOPPY JOB WITH YOUR "COPYIN'"...
TRUE.
HUH.
MAYBE THEY WERE "SEALERS" OR SOMETHIN'. I DUNNO.
HIKARU SHOULD'VE KNOWN 'BOUT THE RITUAL, BUT I DON'T SOMEHOW...
WE ALSO KNOW THE SETTLEMENTS AROUND HERE USED TO BE ONE VILLAGE.
I WONDER WHY THEY GOT SUCH WEIRD NAMES.
AND APPARENTLY PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS FLED HERE 'COS OF THAT.
BUT DID THEY WORSHIP NOUNUKI-SAMA HERE BEFORE WESTERN RELIGIONS CAME?
SINCE THE OLD DAYS, IT'S BEEN HARD FOR THE DOMAIN TO INTERFERE WITH THINGS HERE TOO...

MAYBE THEY BELIEVED THERE WAS A CURSE.
THAT MIGHT BE IT, ACTUALLY.
...OR SOME-THIN'.
HAD PEOPLE ALL LIKE, "THEY BE WORSHIPPIN' SOME WEIRD-ASS GOD OVER YONDER. BEST STAY AWAY"...
HMM... MAYBE IT'S 'COS THEY WERE ALL CREEPY AN' STUFF.
Forbidden Area
Nounuki-sama
Curse?
THAT THING KUREBA-YASHI-SAN SAID ABOUT YA.
AND THEN... THERE'S YOU.
ME?

YER A HUGE MASS OF SOMETHIN', LIKE HELL ITSELF.
AND YA EXIST OUTSIDE THE CYCLE OF REBIRTH.
SHE SAID YER ATTRACTIN' IMPURITIES LIKE A LIGHTNIN' ROD.
BUT YER NOT AN IMPURITY YERSELF.
MAYBE YER SOME SORTA GOD?
NOT REAL SURE WHAT ALL THAT MEANS, THOUGH.
THAT'S HOW SHE DESCRIBED ME?
HEY...
BUT IF I'M A GOD, WHY'M I SO TROUBLED ...?
MAYBE I AM.
FOLKS'VE BEEN ADDIN' "-SAMA" TO MY NAME AN' ALL...

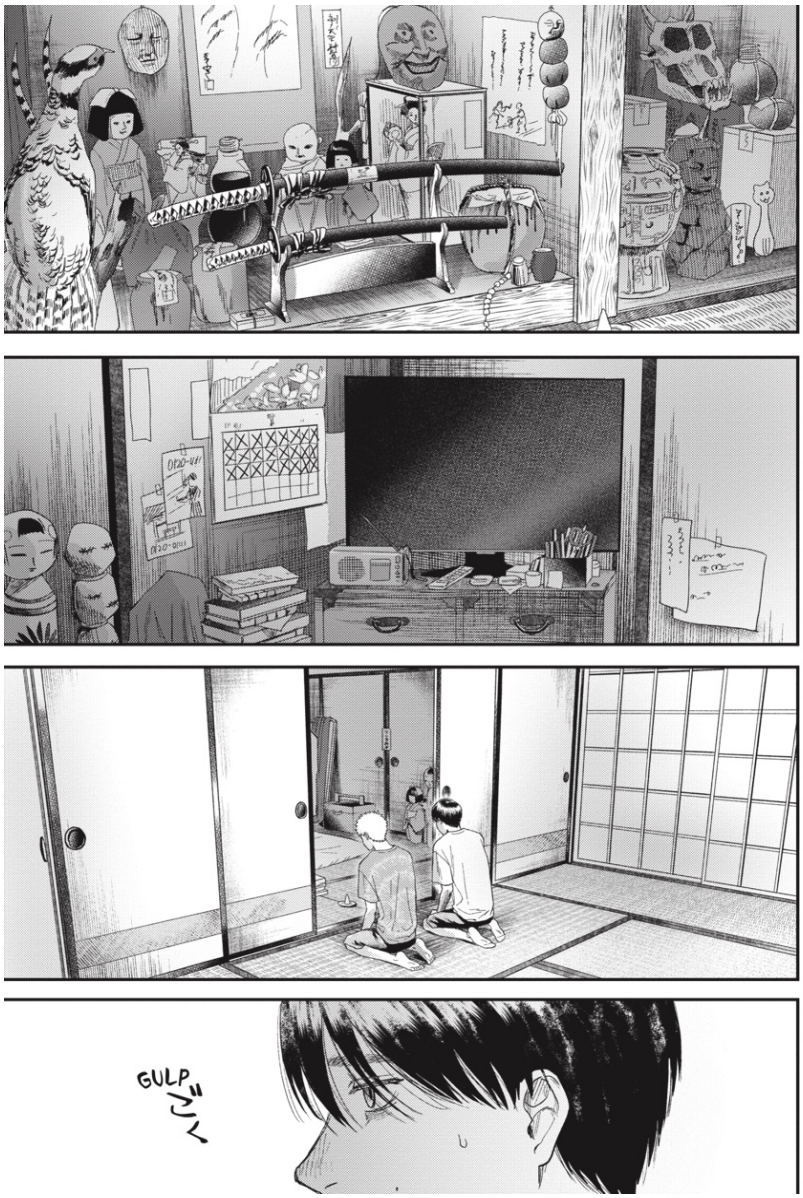
SO...
...I LEFT THE MOUNTAINS, AND 'COS OF THAT, THE IMPURITIES POOLIN' UP THERE STARTED POURIN' OUT, RIGHT?
IF THAT'S THE CASE...
...IF I WENT BACK TO THE MOUN-TAINS...
YA FINALLY FOUND A PLACE FOR YERSELF, DIDN'T YA?
THAT CAN'T BE THE WAY TO DO THIS.
KUREBAYASHI-SAN'S HELPING US, AND YOU AND I, WE'LL FIND A WAY... TOGETHER.
HMM...
BY THE WAY, TWO DAYS AGO, YA CAME BY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, RIGHT?

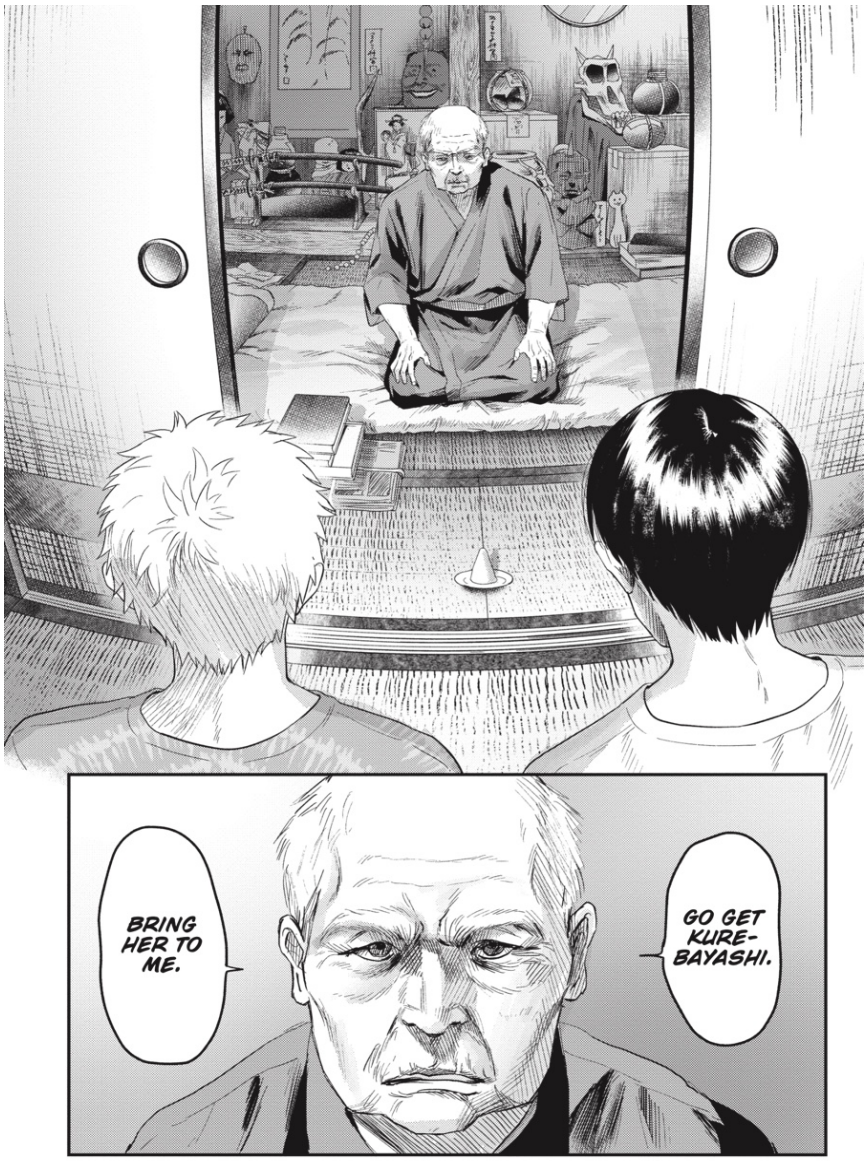
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?
I THINK I DID.
HUH?
OH... YEAH ...
MY MEMORY'S BLURRY.
SO I'M NOT SURE.
I WONDER WHY...
...I...

DING DONG
EXCUSE ME.
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
TAKEDA RESI-DENCE
IT'S A LEAD...
...SO IT'S WORTH A SHOT.
THINK HE'LL ACTUALLY TALK TO US?
HIS SON'S SCARY ENOUGH AS IT IS.
SURE IS.
OLD MAN TAKEDA'S A SHUT-IN, AIN'T HE?

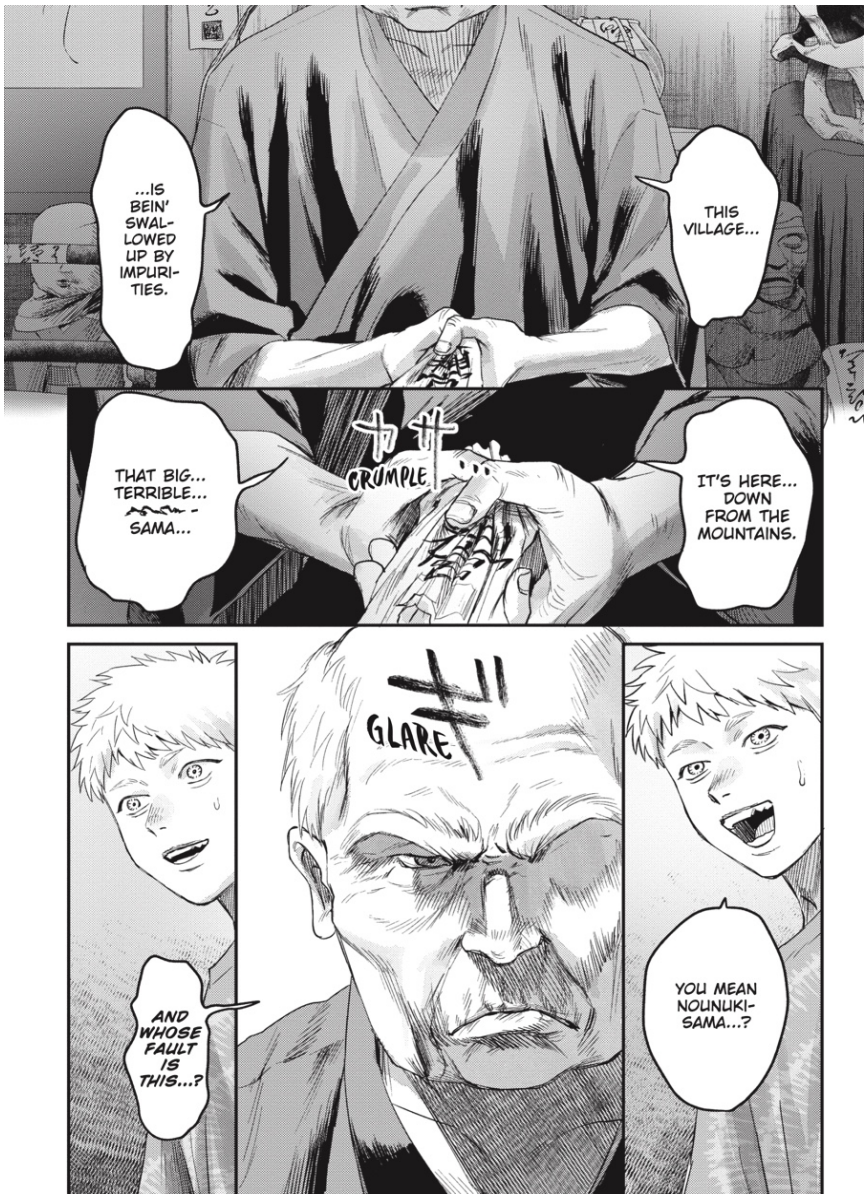
WELL... UH...
WE'D LIKE TO ASK OLD MAN TAKEDA SOME QUESTIONS...
...FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, WHAT Y'ALL WANT?
YER THE INDOU BOY, AND...? WELL, I'LL BE!
WHAT Y'ALL NEED?
MY FATHER-IN-LAW? NOT GONNA HAPPEN WITH THE STATE HE'S IN...
HE WON'T EVEN GO OUTSIDE. WHAT Y'ALL WANNA ASK HIM ANYWAY?
EVEN A HOUSEWIFE LIKE ME HAS A FEW FAVORS OWED TO HER HERE AND THERE...
IF YOU FIND YERSELF IN A BIND, JUST MENTION MY NAME.
AH!

SOMEONE NAMED KUREBAYASHI ASKED US TO COME BY, SO...
KURE-BAYASHI...?
I THINK SHE'S THE PERSON MY FATHER-IN-LAW'S BEEN LOOKIN' FOR...
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZ
Y'ALL STAY RIGHT THERE.
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
WHO EXACTLY IS THAT LADY...?


GULP
ゴクッ

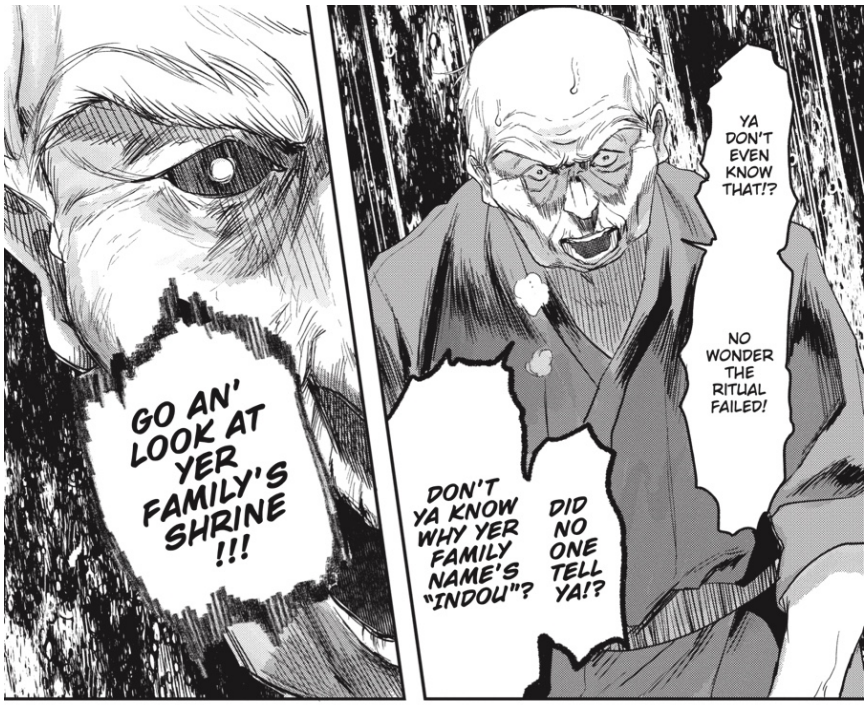

GO GET KURE-BAYASHI.
BRING HER TO ME.

I FINALLY FOUND ONE... A REAL MEDIUM.
HURRY NOW. I NEED HER HERE QUICK.
RUSTLE RUSTLE
WH—
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING FOR KUREBAYASHI-SAN?
I'M THE NEXT ONE. I'M GONNA BE KILLED.
KILLED...? YOU MEAN... AFTER MATSUURA-SAN?
.....


THIS VILLAGE...
...IS BEIN' SWAL-LOWED UP BY IMPURI-TIES.
IT'S HERE... DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAINS.
CRUMPLE
THAT BIG... TERRIBLE... -SAMA...
YOU MEAN NOUNUKI-SAMA...?
GLARE
AND WHOSE FAULT IS THIS...?

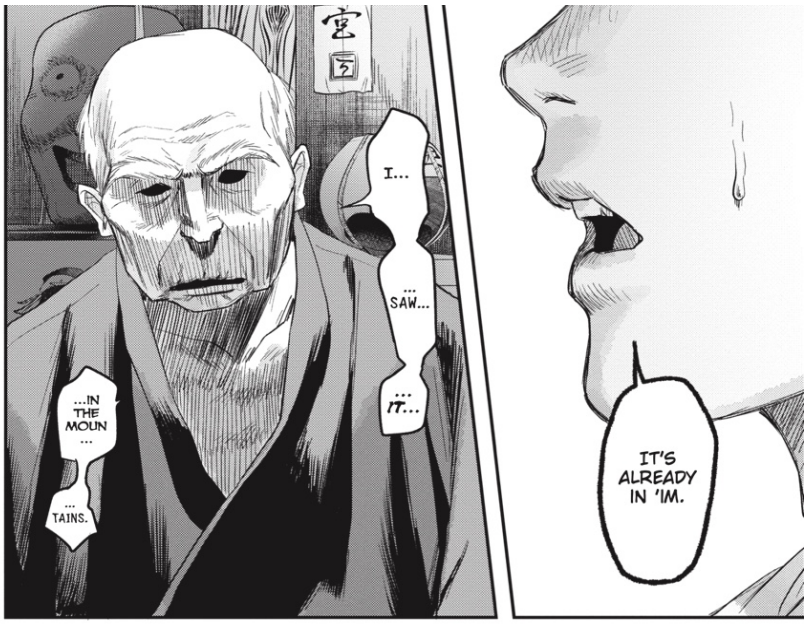
TELL ME, "INDOU" BOY...
...JUST WHO'S TO BLAME FOR ALL THIS...?
HUH ...?
THIS ALL GOES BACK TO THE TABOO COMMITTED BY AN INDOU!
AN' SCORES OF PEOPLE DIED 'COS OF IT!
A TABOO ...?

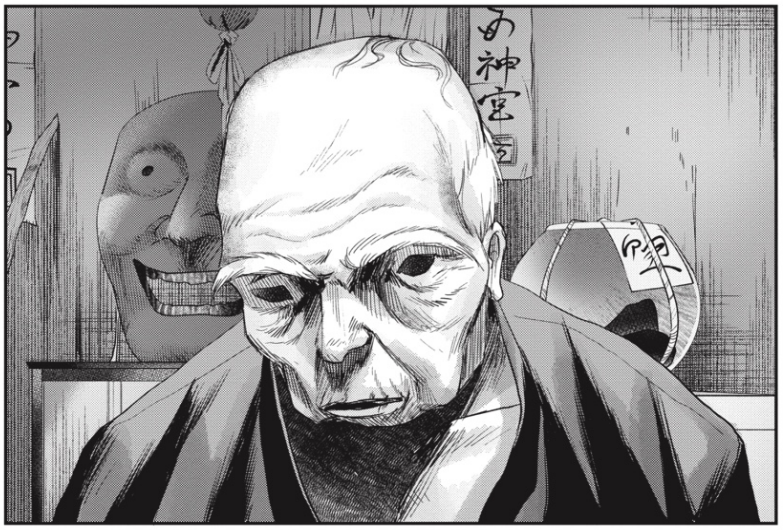
UM...
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO DIED IN THE GREAT FAMINE OF 1749?
THAT'S WHY...FOR GENERATIONS, THE INDOU MEN'VE GONE TO THE MOUNTAINS TO APOLOGIZE...
TO RETURN WHAT THEY RECEIVED...
AS AN INDOU, YOU OUGHTTA KNOW...
->KOFF!<-
->KOFF!<-
IT WAS A CURSE!
WRATH INCURRED OVER A WISH THAT WENT TOO FAR!
IT WASN'T JUST THE FAMINE!
...WHAT EXACTLY DID HE DO?
THAT INDOU FELLA...


GO AN' LOOK AT YER FAMILY'S SHRINE !!!
DON'T YA KNOW WHY YER FAMILY NAME'S "INDOU"?
DID NO ONE TELL YA!?
NO WONDER THE RITUAL FAILED!
YA DON'T EVEN KNOW THAT!?

YOSHIKI.
THIS AIN'T GOOD.

WAI—
WAIT.
C-C-CALM DOWN.


I...
...SAW...
...IT...
...IN THE MOUN...
...TAINS.
IT'S ALREADY IN 'IM.



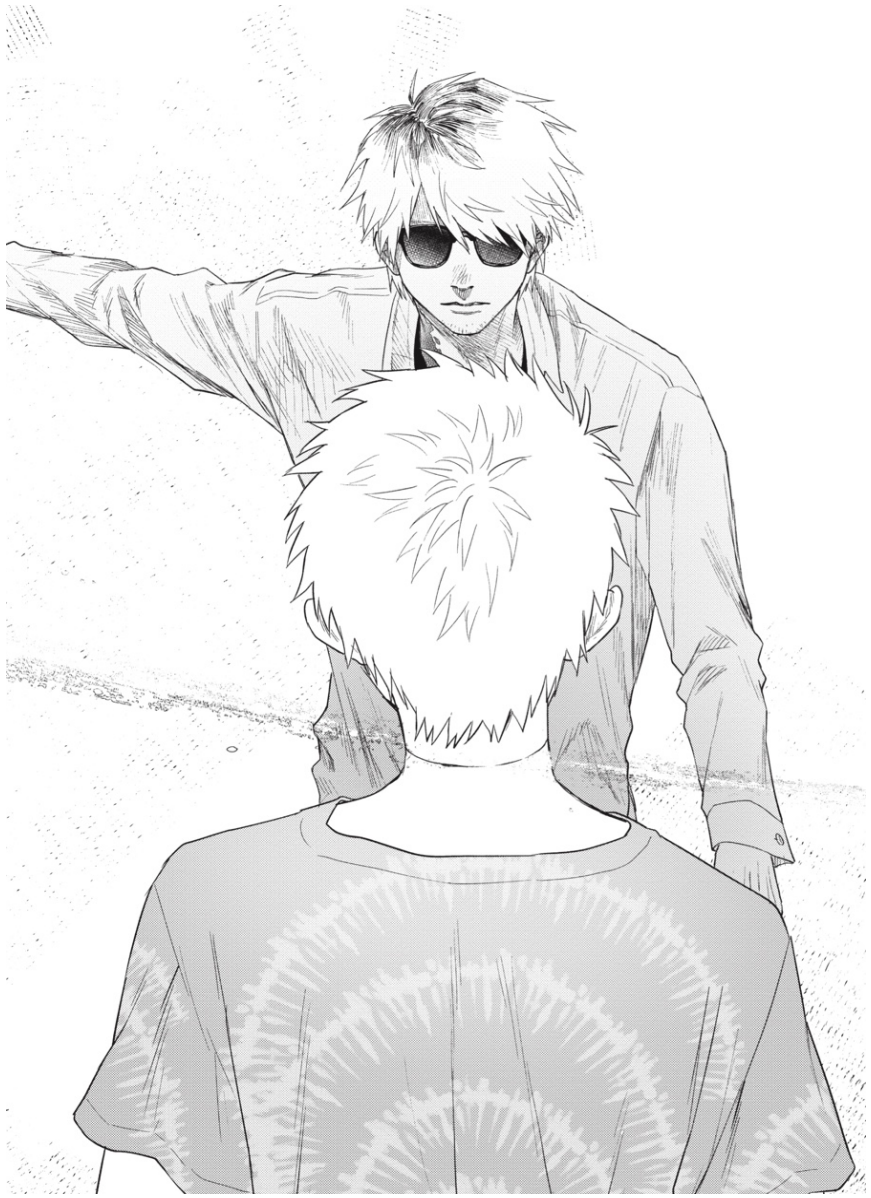
.....
HIS HAIR...
...GOT ALL BUSHY...
.....

SHF
スッ

カチャ
KCHAK
SSST
WHAT!?
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP

GRAB
HELLO THERE...
...HIKARU INDOU-KUN.
...!

WHO'RE YOU?
SNATCH
HUH?
THE HAMSTER GUY FROM BEFORE!
HA HA HA!
WHOOSH
SORRY.
SLAM
I JUST...
...NEED TO CHECK SOMETHING.



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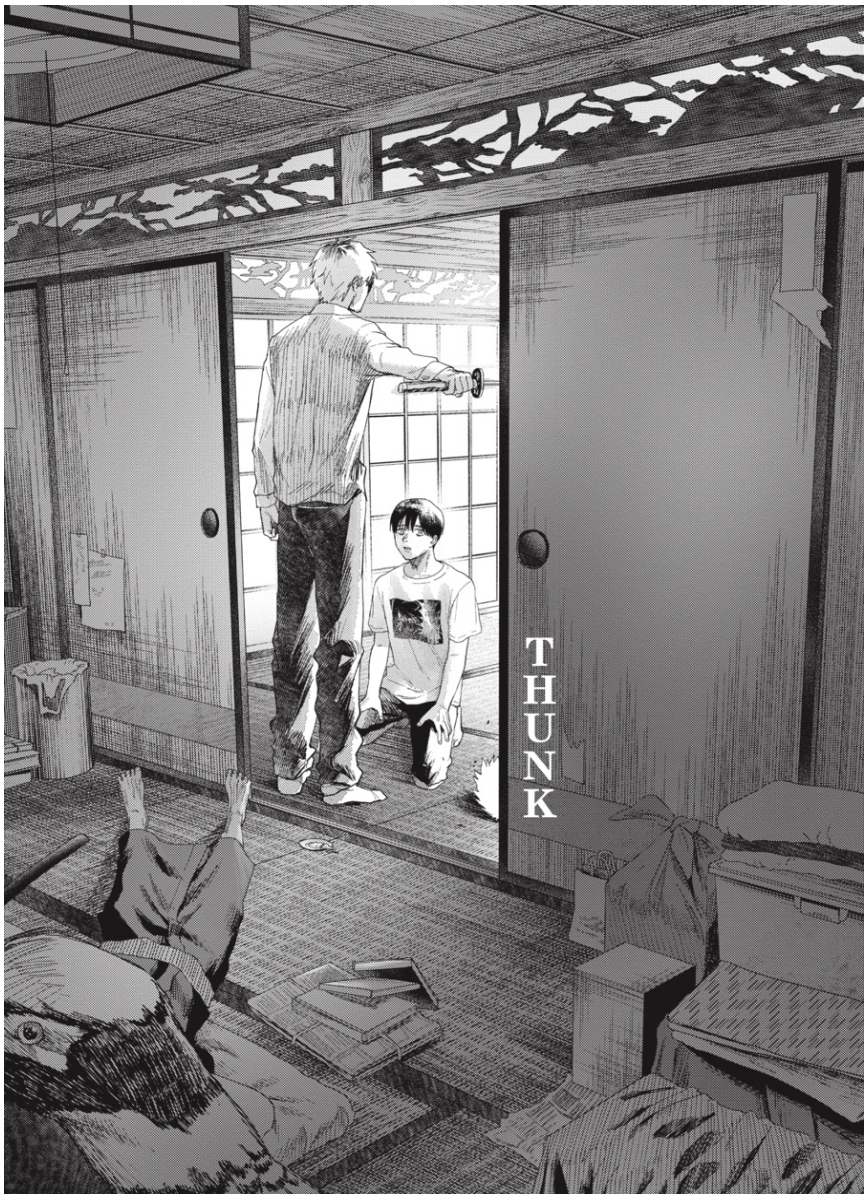

THUNK

HUH?

VOLUME 4 END

TANAKA ISN'T A PSYCHIC, SO HE CAN'T *SEE* ANYTHING.

HE FINDS PHYSICAL SIGNS AND MAKES VARIOUS JUDGMENTS FROM THERE. (EXAMPLE: BELLS, RODENTS)

HE'S NEARLY 6'3".

TRANSLATION NOTES

COMMON HONORIFICS

***-san*:** The Japanese equivalent of Mr./Mrs./Miss. If a situation calls for politeness, this is the fail-safe honorific.
***-sama*:** Conveys great respect; may also indicate that the social status of the speaker is lower than that of the addressee.
***-kun*:** Used most often when referring to boys, this indicates affection or familiarity. Occasionally used by older men among their peers, but it may also be used by anyone referring to a person of lower standing.
***-chan*:** An affectionate honorific indicating familiarity used mostly in reference to girls; also used in reference to cute persons or animals regardless of gender.
no honorific: Indicates familiarity or closeness; if used without permission or reason, addressing someone in this manner would constitute an insult.
-niisan, *nii-san*, *aniki*, etc.: A term of endearment meaning "big brother" that may be more widely used to address any young man who is like a brother, regardless of whether he is related or not.

GENERAL

Hikaru: The Chinese character for Hikaru's name means "light."

PAGE 16

Bark Bulletin: The Japanese "Wansoku" is a parody of a famous internet thread-roundup blog.

PAGE 16-17, 27-28

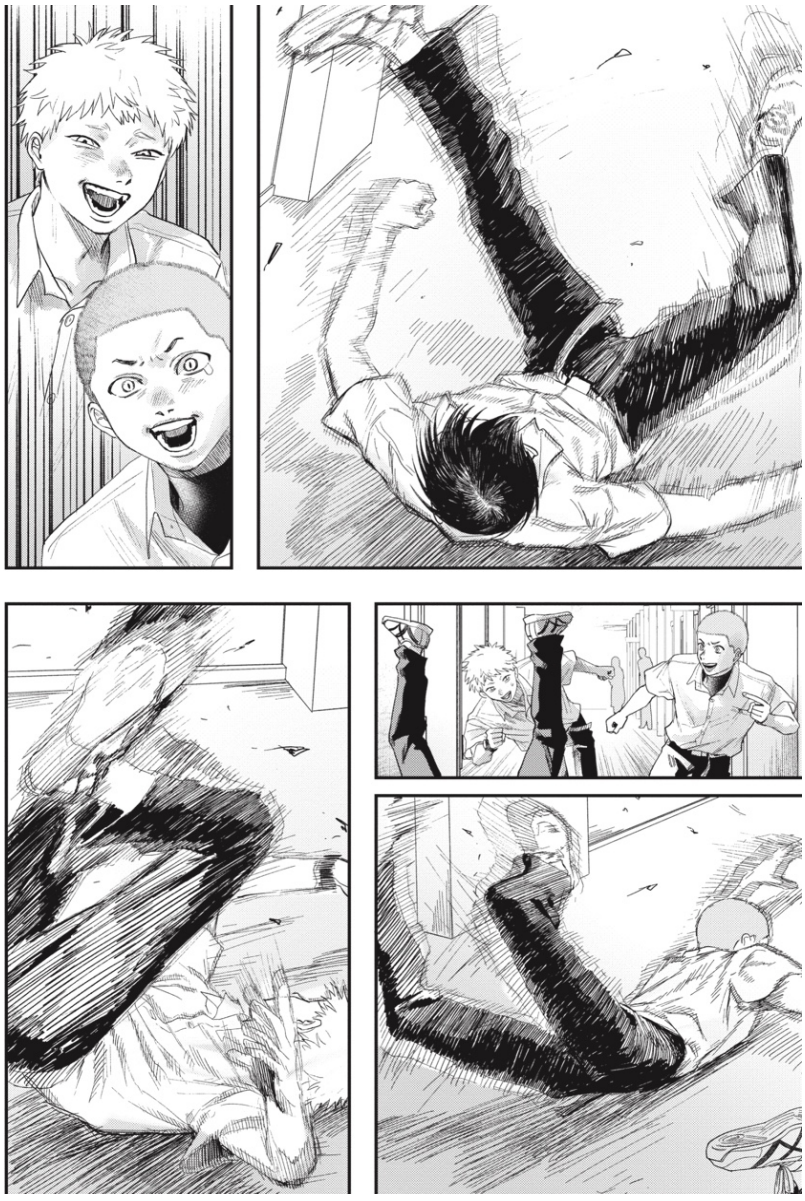
Place-names: The Japanese language uses several writing systems, one of which, called *kanji*, borrows Chinese characters that each have their own meaning. Location names generally use this kanji writing system—hence, the characters that make up place-names each have their own meanings. *Ude* is the Japanese word for "arm," while *ashi* means "leg." Additionally, different kanji can be homophones; the "tachi" in "Kubitachi" was changed from meaning "sever," to "stand," while the pronunciation remained the same.

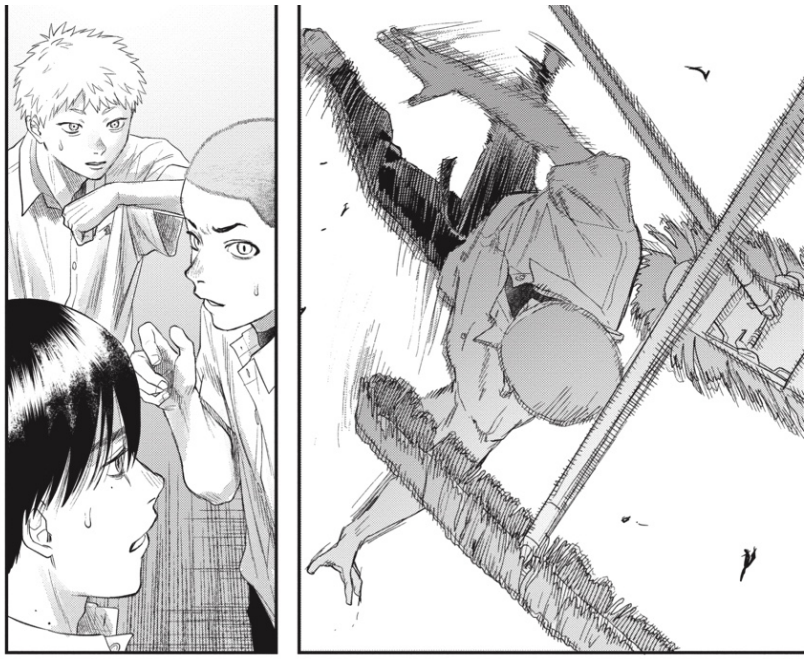
HIKARU HAS A LIMITED VOCABULARY, SO HE'LL SAY THAT HE "LIKES" SOMETHING OR SOMEONE, BUT IT'S DIFFERENT FROM THE HUMAN CONCEPT OF "LIKE." JUST AS HUMANS ESSENTIALLY CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY DOGS DIG HOLES AND CATS SHARPEN THEIR CLAWS, HIKARU'S "LIKE" MAY BE INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO PEOPLE.

BONUS
ONE DAY, A LITTLE BEFORE MAKI BROKE HIS ARM
HEY.
GAB
GAB
GAB
BOMF
BFF BFF

HA HA HA HA!
HEH HA HA!
MAKI.
THE HECK IS THAT? IT'S FREAKY!
WHAT'RE Y'ALL DOIN'?
WAIT.
Y'ALL'RE FREE, RIGHT!?
COME WITH ME.

SURE-FALL HALL?
THIS IS THE ONLY SPOT THAT'S SUPER SLIPPERY LIKE THIS! SERIOUSLY!
WHY?
NO CLUE.
COACH HARA FALLS HERE EVERY DAY.
HE STAYED UP TODAY!!
HUH? SO THE HALLWAY'S THE PROBLEM?
FIGURED IT WAS 'COS HE'S CLUMSY.
IF YA CAN WALK THROUGH THERE WITHOUT FALLIN', YA WIN.
NO ONE'LL FALL AS LONG AS YA KNOW IT'S SLIPPERY...





WHUNK

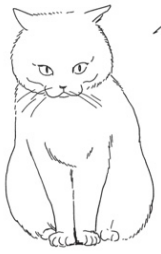
TUG
TUG
GUESS I'LL BE HEADIN' HOME NOW.

!
YOU GOTTA BE KIDDIN' ME!!
THEY SAY THAT WAS THE LOUDEST YOSHIKI HAD EVER RAISED HIS VOICE IN HIS ENTIRE LIFE.

BONUS END

Afterword

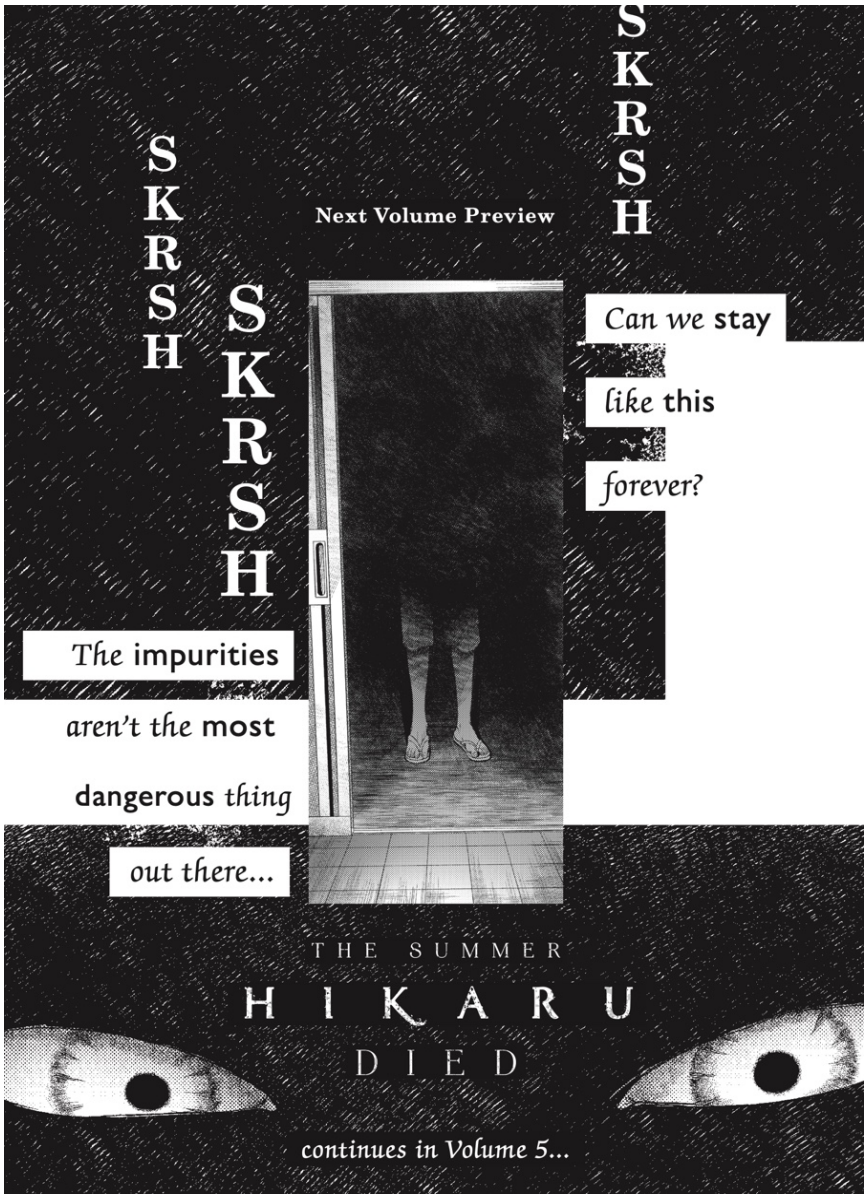
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR READING VOLUME 4. IF THE FIRST THREE VOLUMES WERE THE "DAILY LIFE ARC," THEN VOLUME 4 ONWARD WILL BE THE "MYSTERY-SOLVING ARC." WHAT IS THE SETTLEMENT'S SIN, AND WHAT WILL HIKARU AND YOSHIKI DO? IT WOULD MAKE ME HAPPY IF YOU CONTINUED TO FOLLOW THEIR STORY.



MOKUMOKUREN

ASSISTANT:
NOMU

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!


SKRSH
SKRSH
Next Volume Preview
SKRSH
SKRSH
Can we stay
like this
forever?
The impurities
aren't the most
dangerous thing
out there...
THE SUMMER
HIKARU
DIED
continues in Volume 5...

酒

THE SUMMER HIKARU DIED

MOKUMOKUREN

4

TRANSLATION: AJANI OLOYE

LETTERING: ABIGAIL BLACKMAN

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